THE LOOM OF YOUTH

Bend. B. Joynson
1917

THE LOOM OF YOUTH

"*To him who desireth much, much is given; and to him who desireth little, little is given; but to neither according to the letter of his desire.*"—GILBERT CANNAN.

THE LOOM OF YOUTH

BY

ALEC WAUGH

WITH A PREFACE BY

THOMAS SECCOMBE

LONDON

GRANT RICHARDS LIMITED

ST MARTIN'S STREET

1917

First Printed . . . *July* 1917
Reprinted . . . *July* 1917
Reprinted . . . *August* 1917
Reprinted . . . *September* 1917
Reprinted . . . *September* 1917
Reprinted . . . *November* 1917

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED
EDINBURGH

MY DEAR FATHER,

This book, which I am bringing you, is a very small return for all you have given me. In every mood, in every phase of my shifting pilgrimage, I have found you ever the same—loving, sympathetic, wise. You have been with me in my success, and in my happiness, in my failures and in my disappointments, in the hours when I have followed wandering fires. There has never yet come to me a moment when I did not know that I had but to stretch out my hand to find you at my side. In return for so much, this first book of mine is a very small offering.

But yet I bring it to you, simply because it is my first. For whatever altars I may have raised by the wayside, whatever ephemeral loyalties may have swayed me, my one real lodestar has always been your love, and sympathy, and guidance. And as in life it has always been to you first that I have brought my troubles, my aims, my hopes, so in the world of ideas it is to you that I would bring this, the first-born of my dreams.

Accept it. For it carries with it the very real and very deep love of a most grateful son.

A. W.

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Les océans soulevés n'ont pas réussi à ébrécher le verre d'eau. Des millions d'hommes s'entre-tuent, des empires chancellent, les races s'exterminent et les préfaces demeurent.—ROBERT DE FLERS

§ 1

THE author of the present work came under my observation in the capacity of a Gentleman Cadet at the Royal Military College.

He entered there I think it was in August 1916, and already had some military experience, for he had been training for a few months in the Inns of Court Battalion, Berkhamsted, but he looked young even in comparison with the average eighteen years of the Sandhurst boy, and his manner by its freshness and apparent impressionability made him seem younger yet. His officers in "F" Company, to which he was assigned, were, I believe, a little astonished at the full flow of his impressions on arriving at Sandhurst, a form of confession to which a great number of young warriors find themselves liable on arriving at the R.M.C., but nothing could be more impenetrable than his almost obsequious air of complete innocence and utter obedience. I have wondered since whether this air might possibly be a protective mask, sedulously cultivated by those who have carried the practice of ragging—and the ironical treatment of preceptors generally—to the level of a fine art. Associations of the past prescribed a measure of hospitality to this particular cadet, and I was glad to have an opportunty of inviting him to my house, and seeing as much of him as I could. He soon attained his stripes as a Corporal, and then as a Cadet Sergeant in his company, and therefore had rather more liberty in obtaining leave; and it was interesting for me to see a cadet of this new generation obviously well adapted to his work, and so dissimilar from the average type of embryo officer. By coming to

Sandhurst it is understood, of course, that he had committed himself and his career to the Army as a regular profession.

The *ingenuus puer*, the ostensible innocence to which I have referred, was carried to a high pitch by Alec, as we called him in remembrance of a long-severed acquaintance at a time when he distinguished himself by crawling about our dining-room table; he almost lisped with a deference which it would be impolite to call affected; but I could hardly fail to discover in his judgment a sublime contempt for all the fatted calves of nineteenth-century altars, as he might have called them. To these fanatical worshippers, these partial advocates of *Les Jeunes*—and I have come across several of them—Rupert Brooke is a mellow classic, while the Churchyard Elegy, *In Memoriam*, *Shropshire Lad*, Swinburne, Arnold, Morris, and I rather think Masefield, certainly De la Mare, are hopelessly superannuated. These young men are sublimely unconscious of the havoc they are dealing out among cherished ideals. I suppose we all know them, and manœuvre or fumble—as the case may be—in our attempt to keep them at arm's length, generally by the invocation of such well-tried traditionalists, and almost professional *babe-quellers*, as Rabelais, Swift and Fielding, with some help perhaps from Madame Bovary and Barry Lyndon. For some mysterious reason I have nearly always found these characters immune from the malaria of contempt for the old school which these sucklings have elevated into a kind of science. Their contempt for criticism, their conviction that critics are confessed failures in literature and art, is complete. Another rod that they have in pickle for the tremulous voice of authority is the sublime faith that "those who can, do, while those who can't, teach." This choice sucket, which they regard as the beginning and end of wisdom, comes consolingly to the ears of one whom the chances and caprices of life may have thrown casually upon the preceptorial bench. But what vivacity, and what therapeutic energy in regard to the seamy problems in literature and life some of this young generation do manifest! They feel the most positive conviction that their elders have made a consummate

muddle of things, while they are feverishly anxious not to forgo the intense individualism or idiotic selfishness (as you happen to regard it) which has made the work of the present adult generation such a hopelessly complicated and ironical imbroglio. Nor will they waste any time in setting to work. I was surprised to find that my young friend Alec, on leaving his Public School at seventeen, had harnessed his views at once, not to the poetic drama, which used to be the literary aspirant's first love, but to the philosophic poem and the *tendenz* novel of the latest phase of fictional evolution. He produced a massive novel in typoscript, written amid the tumults of the Devil's Own training camp, which the cursed spite of the moment it appeared had somehow mishandled. I gauged its bulk with an eye of profound misgiving; there was a good deal of manuscript meandering among the typoscript, and the book was admittedly a novel of school life. I thought with a reminiscent shudder of *Stalky & Co.*, the praise and dispraise of Harrow-on-the-Hill, Rugby in the sixties, the active and passive insolence of Winchester and Eton, the ignominy of Farrar, and the calculated falsity of Talbot Baines Reed. I was agreeably disillusioned. Contact once made, the manuscript was consumed almost at a draught; the schoolboy and the schoolgirl found it absorbing; but for the fact that it was easily divisible into sections the demand for it might have given rise to some dissension. It combined, it would appear, two qualities hardly ever found associated in school books: objective reality—the result of close proximity to the subject—and the faculty of prose composition, not in unfaltering technique, but perfectly adequate as a vehicle of literary presentment and self-expression. Monotony was avoided, traditional cant eschewed. Here then is a story of the Public School as it is, or was, in the year of grace 1915. The confirmation of its truth is to be found in the fact that it explains—it contributes in an important measure to an understanding of—Why we are where we stand to-day. What was it that Dr Johnson said about Chatterton? I felt impelled to use the very same words in amazement at this realistic effort,

written in two months, on a theme that has baffled the most expert writers, by a lad of seventeen.

The facts are literally as I have set them down, though many, after a perusal of *The Loom of Youth*, will, I must believe, regard them as scarce credible.

§ 2

They are going to do wonders, the new generation, by the Divine Right of Youth—that is to say, superior genius. To accomplish them will entail some effort, for the task involves nothing less than the transformation of the Public School, and its strangely associated gods of *Olympia* and *Ecclesia Anglicana*.

The present volume touches the spot—Tyranny of the Bloods, which has been evolving into a hide-bound system ever since the Public School assumed its present monopoly. It has developed a good deal since I remember it in working, during which time both the code and language of the Bloods has become distinctively more Red Indian than it ever was in my remembrance. The questions of schoolboy honour, schoolboy language, and other matters, are treated in these pages with an instructive discretion. If parents had the slightest idea of the language their boys at school habitually use (and which is often attributed to the coarsening influences of Sandhurst) they would perhaps be considerably astonished. Another distinctive feature which these pages bring into relief is the inimitable *incuria* which has become the mental uniform of this in many ways admirable but intellectually enervating system. You may drudge at games—that is the theory—that is commendable; but to drudge at the acquisition of knowledge is pitiable, and not to be endured. That is the faith of the Public School boy, which except he believe he cannot be saved. It has fairly helped, you may say, to get us out of the mess of August, 1914. Yes, but it contributed heavily to get us into it! The workings of the system are most incongruous; it inculcates a kind of realism which depends upon ignoring the realities of the situation and the inter-

dependence of modern States ; out of ostensible Imperialists it creates the most inveterate Little Englanders, who know of nothing but isolation, and whose valuations are exclusively insular. The limitations which placed Edwin and Morcar in the soup at the Norman Conquest are just as prevalent to-day as they were in 1066. England is top dog, that's enough ! The best is good enough for us ! No entanglements ; in case of complications, it is manifestly best for us to look on as in 1870 and do the best we can. A general war of course is absurd, who dares ! Look at our Navy ! Germany, nonsense ! What, spoil the beauty of their best customer ! Look at our Empire, and our Trade, and our Shipping, and our World Finance, and our all-conquering Formula—no violence, no cruelty, just "Live and let live," with the grudging addition—in very small print—"And the devil take the hindmost."

Too late the sentimentalists realise that there is another, a rival Formula in the field—the "do as you are told" tradition of coercive discipline, and the startling assumption—it is we who supply the better man and make the biggest sacrifice, it is we who are going to sustain the white man's burden ; our army and diplomacy shall give us, if not Antwerp to Bagdad then Hamburg to Bagdad, and that will do as a minimum basis for world domination. The world is being shaken up, and our *Laboriositas*, our persistence, our political backing, and the sabre's rattle, will give us the best sites and the best markets.

Yet, "Wake up, England ! " doesn't mean, to the hearing of those who put their ears to the ground, more business men ; England, Scotland, Judea, produce plenty of these already. It means rather a little more liveliness in realising the actual situation, more altruism, even a little more *étatisme* if necessary. Too much of this last quality makes the Germans stupid, just as too much learning makes the Germans dull. Hence their pedantic barbarism. Yet we could, it is admitted, do with a little less thought of Number One, and a little more consideration for the State, even in liberty-loving England. The author of *The Loom of Youth* told me he had specialised in History : he had discovered

that by this means he could cut down school hours to a minimum. Speaking from experience, I can commend this part of the book as quite startling in its fidelity. Our Public School youth dislike history, it seems. I recently asked some candidates from some of the most expensive schools in Britain, who were trying their hands at a General Knowledge Paper, to name five great historians; and the following are a representative selection—Homer, Virgil, Oman, Ovid, Micklejohn, Dr Johnson, Pluto and Tout; and the history that they served up was quite on a par with their choice of historians. Ladysmith was a siege in the Indian Mutiny, or a town in which Lord Kitchener was surrounded by the enemy during the whole of the Boer War; *Paradise Lost* was written by Shakespeare; *Utopia* by Guy Thorne; Cetewayo was a great Roman conqueror; *The Canterbury Tales* written by Charles Lamb; the Tuileries, mountains in Italy. I should like to make an authentic list of them, one hundred strong, with the names of the Public Schools that perpetrated them appended. But this dearth of direction of a boy's natural interest in such subjects as the geography, the elementary economics, the politics, the culture, the aversions and pretensions of the various countries in the Europe of to-day, seems to me to spell bankruptcy, if the Public School is going to retain its ascendancy over the growing generation. It means a blank cheque to the Mandarins, who keep at arm's-length any popular attempt at a vivid interest in the family history of Europe. It seems to me like a deliberate attempt to keep alive the old stupidity of splendid isolation. It reminds me of a succinct generalisation I heard fall from the lips of a common soldier entraining at Farnborough in August, 1914: "I am going to fight the bloody Belgians, I am going to fight the whole bloody lot."

Of all the opinions I have received from the Front, not one has given me greater pleasure than this which I received the other day from an officer in the R.F.A.: "I do hope to God you are going to teach the young batch something of history, the history of the world we live in; will anything else matter so much!" If we don't look to it, this war

will make indifferents, Hedonists, Pyrrhonists, Anarchists, Supermen and Super-Anglicans, rather than mere Christians. Christianity I am convinced might be the cure for war if we could only apply it. But as we can't, as things are, we have to place an interim faith in insurance, and for this the only specific seems to be the armed Leaguer, the co-ordination of diplomacy and protective armour. Before this war three millions a week would do what fifty millions cannot accomplish now ; but our pride and humbugging hypocrisy, "Free" trade, the playing fields theory, the Volunteer theory, and denominational philanthropy, forbade. The young officers in France to-day have this to decide for the future, at any rate, for the twenties and thirties. What are they going to do about it! For my part, I think they should throw off the debris of party attachments, the pathetic watch-words and callous consistencies of Cobden and Smiles, and should take history in their hand as they go. A certain amount of human curiosity and human sympathy, with the needs, the griefs, the sufferings, the glories, and the aspirations, of their European neighbours would not come at all amiss. To know the price of security, let the youth of England learn to know what England has thought and suffered. We need hardly invoke a stern determination to keep war and its horrors at arm's-length by the surest method that can be determined. The methods of Christian Science have been tried, and have been found wanting. The unity of war, its problems, its causes, its almost inevitable persistence, until at least men begin to practise charity at home—these are plain for all to see, and these must be in large measure our themes. I believe that they are of transcendent importance to-day. The Trades Union of Public School Instructors do not seem to have assimilated the point of view. The Bloods system for the rank and file, plenty of compulsory Chapel and Divinity, and a specialised Sixth Form for Saps, that seems to be the unchanging ideal.

Cuckoos and gypsies indeed ! We should be sorrier to lose those Public Schools with all their engaging frailties. Shrewsbury, Magdalen, Worcester — school, college,

cathedral close—how wooingly they sound: they stand for what we have known as Old England—the Old England which the old lady of the last century preferred to heaven. It may not be much older than the present plutocracy which has "growed" since 1832, but it stands to us for the past, immemorial, almost unchangeable. And yet a great deal of this "Lanchester Tradition," which is largely the tradition of a sham "Merrie" England that never was, is bound to go. One hundred years since the old trinity of School, Varsity and Church won the European War, when England stood with its back to the wall against a tyrant. The last gleams of this particular chivalry and of the grim old square chins who fought in Crimea and at Lucknow have wellnigh passed. It cannot, unassisted, save the Allies of 1917, though it has fought as bravely and as unreservedly as of old. But success had sapped the vitals of its old perfect self-confidence and we must now have a new worship, new ideals, a more imaginative and communistic form of society and . . . Education must be irradiated. It is seen how women (backward though they still are) by finding ideals have made education more interesting than men—or rather, perhaps, than men have succeeded in making it. Here surely the future of England lies, and our Public Schools, with their noble heritage and glorious material, must discover their share. There will have to be a considerable shattering of Perrins, Trails and tin gods generally. The Athletic god is a fine and a clean and in the main a necessary one, but its monopoly makes Patriotism far too small a thing. This book shows how, and its record is true.

T. S.

GLENCAIRN,
May, 1917.

BOOK I.—WARP AND WOOF

"While I lived I sought no wings,
Schemed no heaven, planned no hell;
But, content with little things,
Made an earth and it was well."

RICHARD MIDDLETON.

CHAPTER I

GROPING

THERE comes some time an end to all things, to the good and to the bad. And at last Gordon Caruthers' first day at school, which had so combined excitement and depression as to make it unforgettable, ended also. Seldom had he felt such a supreme happiness as when he stepped out at Fernhurst station, and between his father and mother walked up the broad, white road that led past the Eversham Hotel to the great grey Abbey, that watches as a sentinel over the dreamy Derbyshire town. There are few schools in England more surrounded with the glamour of mediæval days than Fernhurst. Founded in the eighth century by a Saxon saint, it was the abode of monks till the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Then after a short interregnum Edward VI. endowed it and restored the old curriculum. The buildings are unchanged. It is true that there have sprung up new class-rooms round the court, and that opposite the cloisters a huge yellow block of buildings has been erected which provides workshops and laboratories, but the Abbey and the School House studies stand as they stood seven hundred years ago. To a boy of any imagination, such a place could not but waken a wonderful sense of the beautiful. And Gordon gazing from the school gateway across to the grey ivy-clad studies was taken for

a few moments clean outside himself; and the next few hours only served to deepen this wonder and admiration. For Fernhurst is prodigal of associations. The School House dining-hall is a magnificent oak-panelled room, where generations of men have cut their names; and above the ledge on which repose the silver challenge cups the house has won, is a large statue of King Edward VI. looking down on the row of tables. When he first entered the hall, Gordon pitied those in other houses immensely. It seemed to him that though in "the outhouses"—as they were called at Fernhurst—the eugenic machinery might be more up to date, and the method of lighting and heating far more satisfactory, yet it could not be the same there as in the School House; and he never quite freed himself of the illusion that, if the truth were known, every outhouse boy rather regretted that he had not chosen otherwise. For indeed the bloods of other houses are very often found sitting over the fire in the School House games study.

Until about six o'clock Gordon could not have been happier, his future seemed so full of possibilities. But when his father and mother left him to catch the afternoon train back to town, and the evening train brought with it a swarm of boys in the most wonderful ties and socks, and all so engrossed in their own affairs, and so indifferent to his, Gordon began to feel very lonely. Supper was not till nine and he had three hours to put in. Very disconsolately he wandered round the green slopes above the town where was the town football ground and where in the summer term those members of the Fifteen who despised cricket would enjoy their quiet pipe and long for the rains of November. But that walk did not take long, especially as he did not dare to go out of the sight of the Abbey for fear of getting lost. When he returned to the House the court was loud with shouts and laughter. Everyone had something to do. There was the luggage to fetch from the day-room. The town porter, known generally as Slimy Tim, was waiting to be tipped. Health certificates had to be produced. There was a sporting chance of finding in Merriman's

second-hand bookshop—out of bounds during term-time—an English version of Vergil and Xenophon. There were a hundred things to do for everyone except Gordon. There were several other new boys, doubtless, to be found among this unending stream of bowler hats. But he saw no way of discovering them. He did, it is true, make one attempt. Very bravely he walked up to a rather bored individual who was leaning against the door that led into the studies and asked him if he was a new boy. His reception was not friendly. The person in question was Sandham of the Lower Sixth, who had been made a house prefect and was very conscious of it, and who was also well aware of the fact that he was not very tall. His friends called him "The Cockroach"; and Gordon was told politely to go elsewhere. He did not, however, go where he was told to, but sauntered sadly down to the matron's room, only to find it full of people all with some complaint. Some had lost their keys, others were furious that their people should have been charged for biscuits and sultana cake that they had never had, but the greater part were wanting to know why the old bathroom had been turned into a study for the Chief's secretary, while they had been given in exchange a lot of small zinc hip-baths. To the smaller members of the House this change was rather popular. On the days when there were only four baths among eighty, it did not matter very much to them how large they were, if they were always occupied by the bloods, while however small the new baths might be, there were sufficient to go round. The bloods did not look on the matter in this light.

Gordon walked from room to room utterly miserable. Nobody took the slightest notice of him, only one person asked his name, and that was a small person of one term's standing who wanted to show that he was a power in the land. At last, however, the old cracked bell rang out for supper, and very thankfully he took his place among the new boys at the bottom of the day-room table. Evening prayers in the School House had once been rather a festive occasion, and a hymn chosen by the head of the House was

sung every night. It had been the custom to choose a hymn with some topical allusion. For instance, on the evening when the House tutor had given a hundred lines to every member of the day-room for disturbing a masters' meeting, by playing cricket next door, they chose *Fierce raged the Tempest o'er the Deep*; and on one occasion when an unpopular prefect had been unexpectedly expelled the House was soothed with the strains of *Peace, Perfect Peace.* But those days were over. A new headmaster had come with an ear for music, and the riot of melody that surged from the V. A table seemed to him not only blasphemous, but also inartistic. And so hymn-singing stopped, and only a few prayers were read instead.

On this particular evening the Chief was in high spirits. It was characteristic of his indomitable kindliness and optimism that, though he ended every term in a state of exhaustion, having strained his energy and endurance to the breaking-point, he invariably began the new term in a spirit of geniality and hope. It was not till years later that Gordon came to understand the depth of unselfish idealism that burned behind the quiet modesty of the Chief; but even at first sight the least impressionable boy was conscious of being under the influence of an unusual personality. There was nothing of the theatrical pedagogue about him; he surrounded himself with no trappings of a proud authority. His voice was gentle and persuasive; his smile as winning almost as a child's. The little speech with which he welcomed the House back, and a passing allusion, half humorous, half appealing, to the changes in the bath-rooms were perhaps too homely to impress the imagination of the average inhuman boy. But they were the sincere expression of the man—an idealist, with an unfailing faith in human nature, founded in an even deeper faith in Christianity.

When he had gone, Gordon ventured to look round at the sea of faces. On a raised dais was the Sixth Form table. In the middle, haughty, self-conscious, with sleepy-looking but watchful eyes, sat the captain of the House, Lovelace major, in many ways the finest athlete Fernhurst

ever produced, who had already got his County cap and played " Rugger " for Richmond. Gordon had seen him bat at Lord's for the Public Schools *v.* M.C.C., and before he had come to Fernhurst, Lovelace had been the hero of his imagination ; ambition could hardly attain a higher pedestal.

There were about twelve in all at the Sixth Form table, of whom the majority were prefects ; and no one could leave the hall till one of them went out. After a few minutes' conversation, in which no one ate anything, although plates of hot soup were busily provided, someone got up and went out. Immediately there was a rush towards the door, and Gordon was borne down the long winding passage to the foot of the stairs that led to the dormitory. Here, however, for some reason, everyone stopped and began to talk at the top of their voices. Gordon saw no reason for the delay, but thought it better to follow the throng, and waited. As a matter of fact, the last train up from town had just come in. There are some who always demand the last ounce of flesh ; there are always those who return by the last possible train, although it stops at every station on the way. Suddenly, however, the House tutor shouted from the top of the stairs, " Lights out in the upper dormitories by nine-thirty," and the procession moved upstairs.

The upper dormitories in the School House were, like most other school dormitories, a dismal spectacle. There was a long passage running down from the House tutor's room, and on the left were doors leading into long, bare rooms, with the usual red-quilted beds and the usual washhand basins. On the right-hand side was the bath-room. The upper dormitories were occupied by the smaller boys of the House. Once a prefect had been put in charge over each room, but the system did not work very well, and soon came to an abrupt end, so that there was only the House tutor to keep them in order till the prefects went to bed in the lower dormitories an hour later ; and then any sound was promptly dealt with. Gordon had been placed in the largest room, which was known as

" the nursery." It contained ten beds, and only four of its inhabitants were of more than one term's standing. Among other less enviable claims to fame, it had the reputation of being the finest football-playing dormitory, and every night its members would race up from supper to play their game before the House tutor came to put out lights at nine-fifteen. The new boys took it in turns to keep " cave," and it must be owned that for the first few weeks the sentinel rather preferred the rôle of onlooker to that of player, and found it hard to sympathise with those who were continually flinging abuse at the huge football crowds at Stamford Bridge. This night there was, of course, hardly any ragging. There was so much to talk about, and some faint interest was even taken in the new boys, for two very important-looking young people, Turner and Roberts, swaggered into the dormitories " just to have a squint at the new kids," but after a casual inspection Turner said in a lordly manner, " Good lord! what a crew," and the pair sought better things elsewhere. Turner and Roberts were very insignificant people during the daytime: they were little use at games, and even a year's spasmodic cribbing had only managed to secure them a promotion from the Second Form to the Third. But when the evening came they were indeed great men, and ruled over a small dormitory that contained, besides themselves, only four new boys who looked up to them as gods and hung on their every word.

But very soon the wanderings of these two gentlemen ceased, and at the sound of the House tutor's tread down the passage they fled very ingloriously to their own abode. Mr Parkinson, the House tutor, was one of the most popular masters in the school. He had only just missed his blue at Oxford, and since he had gone down had devoted all his energies to training on the junior members of the House at football and cricket. He was in rather a hurry this particular evening, as he had to make out the list of studies, but he shook hands with everyone, and asked all the new boys their names before turning out the lights, with instructions not to kick up too much row.

At last Gordon was at rest. For ten hours at least he would not have to worry about anything. He lay back in bed contentedly and listened to the conversation. As was natural, the talk was at first only about the holidays, but it soon drifted round to school politics, and one Bradford began to hold forth on the composition of the Fifteen, as if he was the captain's bosom friend. To Gordon, of course, most of the names mentioned signified nothing. He gathered that the great Lovelace was going to be captain and was sure to have rows with Buller the games master, but besides this he picked up very little. Gradually the conversation turned on individuals, and especially on a certain Meredith, who was apparently a double-first, with a reputation that did not end on the cricket pitch.

"You know I think Meredith goes a bit too far at times," came a voice from the middle of the room.

Bradford rose at once. "What the hell do you mean? Meredith go too far? Why, he is a splendid wicket-keeper, and far and away the finest half-back in the school. You must allow a good deal to a blood like him."

"Oh, I know he is a magnificent athlete and all that, but don't you think he does rather a lot of harm in the House?"

"Harm? Who to?"

"Well, I mean there's Davenham now and——"

"Davenham!" came the scornful retort. "What does it matter what happens to Davenham? He's absolutely useless to the House, rotten at games and spends his whole time reading about fossils. Who cares a curse about Davenham!"

"Oh, I suppose you are right, but——"

"My dear ass, of course I am right. Meredith is a simply glorious fellow. Do you remember the way he brought down Freeman in the Two Cock? Why, the House simply couldn't get on without him."

To Gordon all this conveyed very little. He had no idea who Meredith or Davenham were. The only thing he realised was that for those who wore a blue and gold ribbon laws ceased to exist. It was apparently rather advantageous to get into the Fifteen. He had not looked on

athletics in that light before. Obviously his preparatory school had failed singularly to keep level with the times. He had always been told by the masters there that games were only important for training the body. But at Fernhurst they seemed the one thing that mattered. To the athlete all things are forgiven. There was clearly a lot to learn.

CHAPTER II

FINDING HIS FEET

THE new boy's first week at a Public School is probably the most wretched he will ever pass in his life. It is not that he is bullied. Boots are not shied at him when he says his prayers; he is not tossed in a blanket; it is merely that he is utterly lonely, is in constant fear of making mistakes, is never certain of what may happen next, and so makes for himself troubles that do not exist. And when Gordon wrote home to his people at the end of his second day it did not need a very clever mother to read between the lines and see that her son was hopelessly miserable.

His worries began at once. On the first day of term discipline is, of course, very slack. There is only an hour's work, which is, for the most part, spent in finding out what books are needed. There is no preparation set for the evening, breakfast is at eight-thirty instead of seven-forty-five, and it does not matter how late anyone comes in. And so when, at eight o'clock, the School House butler, who had watched many generations pass by with the same imperturbable smile, walked down the dormitories ringing a horribly cracked bell, no one paid any attention. There was tons of time. Ordinarily no one ever got up till the quarter, and to-day—well, twenty past would be ample. A voice from the end of the room muttered drowsily: "Damn that bell." But besides that nothing happened. Gordon was fearfully perplexed. He had expected everyone to leap out of bed, seize a towel and rush to the shower-bath, but no one had moved. Could it be possible that they were still asleep and had not heard the bell? It seemed incredible, but it might be so. And if it were, ought he to wake them up? It seemed rather cheek for a

new boy, but then, supposing the whole dormitory were late.

Greatly daring, he stretched out a hand and touched the arm of the boy sleeping next him. The individual in question merely turned over subconsciously and said something fierce. Gordon relapsed into a state of terror. During the next quarter of an hour he passed through all the miseries of an unknown fear. Only twenty-four hours ago he had been at breakfast with his father and mother in his home at Hampstead. It seemed years ago. Here he was face to face with horrible, unexplained things. The suspense grew unbearable. He was sure he heard someone moving next door; the others were getting up; he would be late his first day. What a start! But just as he was visioning the most dire punishments, James, an insignificant person of one term's standing, slowly pushed back the bedclothes, picked up a towel and lethargically moved towards the door. Gordon jumped up, happy at last, and made for the huge new bathroom. It had an iron floor, sloped so as to allow water to drain off easily, and contained six small baths and showers fixed above them. The room was practically empty. He was glad of this; he did not want to have a shower with a lot of people looking on. The water was very cold—he was used to a tepid bath; but by the time he had begun to dry, the place was full of boys all shouting at once. No one is more loud or insistent than he who has just ceased to be labelled new. He likes everyone to know how important he is, how free and how unfettered by rules, and the best way to this end is to shout and curse everything. The room was filled with shouts of "Good God! are we expected to get clean in babies' tubs?" "What a fool the Chief is." "Oh, damn your eyes, that's my towel." "No, there's yours, you blasted idiot." Gordon was immensely shocked at the language. He had come from a preparatory school run by a master with strong views on swearing, and for that matter on everything. He had been kept thoroughly in order. He got out of the bathroom as quickly as possible and made for his dormitory. It did not take long to dress. There was indeed very little

time, and as the half-hour struck, he was carried down in the throng to the dining-hall.

Breakfast is always rather a scramble, and nowhere more so than at a Public School. The usual Fernhurst breakfast lasted about ten minutes. Hardly anyone spoke, only the ring of forks on plates was heard and an occasional shout of "Tea" from the Sixth Form table. They alone could shout at meals, the others had to catch the servant's eye. To-day, however, there was a good deal of conversation. Those who had come by the last train had not seen all their friends the night before. There was much shaking of hands. In the middle a loud voice from the head of the Sixth Form table shouted out: "Silence! I want to see all new boys in my study at nine o'clock." It was Clarke, the head of the House, who spoke. He was tall, with pince-nez, one of those brilliant scholars who are too brilliant to get scholarships. He was a fanatic in many ways, a militarist essentially, a firebrand always. There was bound to be trouble during his reign. He could never let anything alone. He was a great fighter.

Gordon looked up with immense awe. Clarke looked so powerful, so tremendous; even Lovelace himself was not much greater. He wondered vaguely what would be said to them.

And indeed Clarke was even more imposing in his own study. The back of the room sloped down into a low alcove in which hung strange Egyptian curtains. The walls were decorated with a few Pre-Raphaelite photogravures. Behind the door was a pile of cases. Clarke sat with his back to the window.

"Now you are all quite new to school life," he began, "entirely ignorant of its perils and dangers, and you are now making the only beginning you can ever make. You now start with clean, fresh reputations. I don't know how long you will remain so, but you must remember that you are members of the finest house in Fernhurst. Last year we had the two finest athletes, Wincheston and Lovelace, who played cricket for Leicestershire, and is now captain of the House. We had also the two finest scholars,

Scott and Pembroke, both of whom won scholarships. Now we can't all be county cricketers, we can't all win scholarships, but we can all work to one end with an unfailing energy. You will find prefects here who will beat you if you play the ass. Well, I don't mind ragging much and it is no disgrace to be caned for that. But it is a disgrace to be beaten for slacking either at games or work. It shows that you are an unworthy member of the House. Now I want all of you to try. Some of you will perhaps never rise above playing on House games, or get higher than the Upper Fifth. But if you can manage to set an example of keenness you will have proved yourselves worthy of the School House, which is beyond doubt *the* House at Fernhurst. That's all I have got to say."

That scene was in many ways the most vivid in Gordon's career. From that moment he felt that he was no longer an individual, but a member of a great community. And afterwards when old boys would run down Clarke, and say how he had stirred up faction and rebellion, Gordon kept silent; he knew that whatever mistakes the head of the House might have made, yet he had the welfare of the House at heart and loved it with a blind, unreasoning love that was completely misunderstood.

It is inevitable that a new boy's first few days should be largely taken up in making mistakes, and though it is easy to laugh about them afterwards, at the time they are very real miseries. At Fernhurst, things are not made easy for the new boy. Gordon found himself placed in the Upper Fourth, under Fleming, a benevolent despot who was a master of sarcasm and was so delighted at making a brilliant attack on some stammering idiot that he quite forgot to punish him. "Young man, young man," he would say, "people who forget their books are a confounded nuisance, and I don't want confounded nuisances with me." Gordon got on with him very well on the whole, as he had a sense of humour and always laughed at his master's jokes. But he only did Latin and English in the Fourth room, for the whole school was split up into sets, regardless of forms, for sharing such less arduous labours as science, maths, French

and Greek. So that Gordon found himself suddenly appointed to Mr Williams' Greek set No. V. with no idea of where to go. After much wandering, he eventually found the Sixth Form room. He entered; someone outside had told him to go in there. A long row of giants in stick-up collars confronted him. The Chief sat on a chair reading a lecture on the Maccabees. All eyes seemed turned on him.

"Please, sir," he quavered out in trembling tones, "is this Mr Williams' Greek set, middle school No. V?"

There was a roar of laughter. Gordon fled. After about five more minutes' ineffectual searching he ran into a certain Robertson in the cloisters. Now Robertson played back for the Fifteen.

"I say, are you one of the new boys for Williams' set?"

"Yes."

"Well, look here, he's setting us a paper, and I don't know much about it, and I rather want to delay matters. So look here, hide yourself for a few minutes. I am just going to find Meredith and have a chat."

For ten minutes Gordon wandered disconsolately about the courts. When at last Robertson returned with his protégé the hour was well advanced, and there would be no need for Robertson to have to waste his preparation doing an imposition.

On another occasion one of the elder members of his form told him to go to "Bogus" for French. Now "Bogus" was short for the Bogus officer, and was the unkind appellation of one Rogers. Tall, ascetic and superior, with the air of a great philosopher, he had, like Richard Feverel's uncle, Adrian Harley, "attained that felicitous point of wisdom from which one sees all mankind to be fools." He was one of the happy few who are really content; for in the corps as Officer Commanding he could indulge continuously in his favourite pastime of hearing his own voice, and as a clerk in orders the pulpit presented admirable opportunities for long talks that brooked no interruptions. In the common room his prolix anecdotes were not encouraged. But in the pulpit there was no gainsaying him. His dual personality embodied the spirit of

" the Church Militant," a situation the humour of which the School did not fail to grasp. But of all this Gordon, of course, knew nothing. After a long search for this eminent divine, in perfect innocence he went up to a master he saw crossing the courts.

" Please, sir, can you tell me where Mr Bogus' class-room is ? " He did not understand till weeks afterwards why the master took such a long time to answer, and seemed so hard put to it not to laugh.

The story provided amusement in the common room for many days. Rogers was not too popular.

It was in this atmosphere of utter loneliness and inability to do anything right that Gordon's first week passed. Of the other new boys none of them seemed to him very much in his line. There was Foster, good-looking and attractive, but plausible and insincere. There was Rudd, a scholar who had passed into the Fifth, spectacled, of sallow appearance, and with a strange way of walking. Collins was not so bad, but his mind ran on nothing but football and billiard championships. The rest were nonentities, the set who drift through their six years, making no mark, hurting no one, doing little good. Finally they pass out into the world to swell the rout of civilised barbarians whom it " hurts to think " and who write to the papers, talk a lot about nothing and then die and are forgotten. The Public School system turns out many of these. For it loves mediocrity, it likes to be accepted unquestioningly as was the Old Testament. But times change. The Old Testament and the Public School system are now both of them in the melting-pot of criticism.

For the most part Gordon kept to himself. No one took any notice of him, for he did nothing worthy of notice. He had rather looked forward to his first game of football, for he had been quite a decent half-back at his preparatory school. He might perhaps do something brilliant. But for his first two days he wasn't allowed even to play a game. With the other new boys he shivered in the autumn wind while Meredith, who rather surprisingly seemed quite an ordinary sort of person, instructed them in how to pack

down. They were then told to watch the Upper game and see how football should be played. It was here that Gordon first saw Buller, the games master. He was indeed a splendid person. He wore a double-breasted coat, that on anyone else would have looked ridiculous, and even so was strikingly original. He had the strong face of one who had fought every inch of his way. It was a great sight to see "the Bull," as he was called, take a game; he rushed up and down the field cursing and swearing. His voice thundered over the ground. It was the first game after the summer holidays, and everyone felt rather flabby. At half-time the great man burst out: "I have played football for twenty-five years, I coached Oxford teams and Gloucestershire teams, led an English scrum, and for fifteen years I have taught footer here, but never saw I such a display! Shirking, the whole lot of you! Get your shoulders down and shove. Never saw anything like it. Awful!" The Bull said this to every team at least three times every season, but he was every bit as generous with his praise as with his blame when things went well, and he was a great man, a personality. Even a desultory Pick-Up woke into excitement when the shrill, piping voice of a full-back came in with, "'The Bull's' coming." There was only one man in Fernhurst who was not afraid of him, and that was Lovelace, who was indeed afraid of nothing, and who towered over his contemporaries by the splendour of his athletic achievements, and the strength of an all-mastering personality.

On the next day Gordon had to watch another Upper game. This time "the Bull" was more or less quiet. Lovelace was at the top of his form, and Meredith twice cut through brilliantly and scored between the posts. Then life seemed to Buller very good. After the game he rolled up to his house perfectly satisfied, whistling to himself. It was not until the Saturday that Gordon actually played in a game. He was originally performing on the Pick-Up; but after a few minutes he was fetched to fill a gap in a House game. He was shoved into the scrum, was perfectly useless, and spent his whole time trying to escape notice.

Only once he got really near the ball. Just before half-time the ball was rolling slowly towards him, the opposing full-back had failed to reach touch. Gordon, steadying himself as at soccer, took a tremendous kick at the ball, which screwed off his foot, and landed in the hands of the outside three-quarter, who easily outpaced the defence and scored.

"You bloody little fool," said someone. "For God's sake, no soccer tricks here."

Gordon did not attempt to repeat the performance. He was supremely wretched, and merely longed for the day to end. No one understood him, or even wanted to. His home became a very heaven to him during these days.

But sooner or later pain grows into a custom. The agonies of Prometheus and Ixion must after a little while have ceased to cause anything more than boredom. As soon as the mind is accustomed to what is before it, there is an end of grief. It is the series of unexpected blows that hurts. And so, Gordon after his first week found that life was not so hard after all. He knew where his various class-rooms were; his time-table was complete; he had slipped into the routine, and found that there was a good deal of merriment for anyone with a sense of humour.

Fleming was a constant source of amusement. One day Mansell, a member of the School House Fifteen, had forgotten his book. The usual penalty for forgetting a book was a hundred lines. Mansell had been posted on the Lower ground. If he did well, he might be tried for the Second Fifteen. The book must be got at all costs.

"Please, sir, may I go and get a handkerchief?"

"Yes, young man, and hurry up about it."

After five minutes Mansell returns, blowing his nose vigorously in his silk handkerchief of many colours, for Mansell is by way of being a nut. The book is under his coat. He sits down.

Fleming fixes him with a stony glare—a long pause.

"Mansell, take that book from under your coat."

Reluctantly the miscreant does so. The dream of a Second's cap vanishes.

"Conjurer!"

The roar of laughter was sufficient to make Fleming forget all about impositions. But Mansell did not perform very well on the Lower ground, and Gordon overheard Lovelace remarking to Meredith that Mansell was really rather a come-down for a School House cap.

But, whatever his football performances, he was a continual source of laughter. He and Gordon were in the same Greek set and studied under Mr Claremont, a dry humorist, who had adopted school-mastering for want of something better to do, had apparently regretted it afterwards, and developed into a cynic.

Mansell was easily the most popular man and the worst scholar in the set, in which there were nineteen in all. Each week Claremont read out the order. Gordon was usually about half-way up. Mansell fluctuated; one week he "bagged" the translation Clarke was using for scholarship work. He was second that week. But Clarke discovered the theft. There was a fall. Many names were read in the weekly order, but Mansell's was not of them. At last Claremont reached him.

"Greek Prose, Mansell 19th; Greek Translation, Mansell 19th; Combined Order, Mansell 19th." A roar of laughter. "Well, Mansell, I don't think that a titter from your companions is a sufficient reward for a week's bad work."

The immediate result of this was that Mansell, realising that without some assistance, printed or otherwise, his chances of a good report were small, got leave from Clarke to fetch Gordon from the day-room to his study in hall to prepare the work together. Gordon at once thought himself a tremendous blood. There were advantages, after all, in being moderately clever.

About this time another incident helped to bring Gordon a little more before the public eye. There had been a match in the afternoon *v.* Milton A. Lovelace, as happens to all athletes at times, had an off day. He missed an easy drop, fumbled two passes, and when the School were leading by one point just before time, failed to collar his man, and Milton A won by two points. "The Bull" raged furiously.

Lovelace took hall that night. He sat at the top of the table in the day-room and gazed about, seeking someone on whom to vent his wrath. There was a dead silence. Gordon was writing hard at a Latin prose. He looked up for a second while thinking of a word.

"Caruthers, are you working?" Lovelace snapped out.

"Yes."

"You liar, you were looking out of the window, weren't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"I'll teach you to tell lies to me. Come and see me at nine o'clock."

Very miserably Gordon continued his work. After about a quarter of an hour:

"Caruthers, will you take six, or a hundred lines?"

Gordon thought it was not the thing to take lines:

"Six."

"Will you have it now or afterwards?"

"Now."

"Hunter, go and get a cane from my study."

Trembling with fear, Gordon heard Hunter's feet ring down the stone passage, saw him running across to the studies by the old wall. There was silence again; then the sound of feet; Hunter returned.

"Come out here, Caruthers."

It hurt tremendously; he went back wishing he had taken the hundred lines. But the others thought it amazingly brave of him. Lovelace minor, handsome, debonair, a swashbuckler in the teeth of authority, came up afterwards and said:

"Damned plucky of you. My brother's a bit of an ass at times."

It was not really plucky, it was merely the fear of doing the wrong thing. But the House thought that, after all, there might be something in at least one of those wretched new kids. One or two people looked at him almost with interest that night in hall.

That was Gordon's first step. Afterwards things were not so hard. Mansell began to think him rather a sport,

as well as an indispensable aid to classical studies, and Mansell counted for something. Meredith smiled at him one day. . . . A Public School was not such a bad hole after all. And his cup of happiness seemed almost running over when one afternoon after a game of rugger he overheard Lovelace minor say to Hunter:

"That kid Caruthers wasn't half bad."

For he saw that the sure way to popularity lay in success on the field; and because it was the weak as the strong point of his character that he longed with a wild longing for power and popularity, it was already his ambition to be some day captain of the House, and to lead his side to glorious victories.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW PHILOSOPHY

"Of course 'the Bull' may be a jolly fine fellow and all that, but he does exceed the limit at times."

Lovelace minor was speaking; it was the evening after the Dullridge Match. The school had been beaten by twenty-seven points to three, by a much faster and heavier side. Meredith had been ill and could not play. Lovelace major had sprained his ankle in the first half, and though he had gone on playing was very little use. The match had all along been a foregone conclusion. But "the Bull" had lost his temper entirely.

Hunter, Mansell and Jeffries, a Colt, who ran a good chance of getting his House cap the next term, were discussing the matter. Gordon, who had come in to do Thucydides, was sitting in the background, a little shy and very interested.

"Is it true," said Jeffries, "that your brother threatened to resign the captaincy if he did not keep quiet?"

"Yes. By Jove, my brother let him have it. That's what 'the Bull' wants; he wants a fellow who's not afraid of him to stand up against him. Fernhurst has been run by him long enough. He is a splendid fellow; and when he's sane I almost love him. But he has become an absolute tyrant. Thank God, he can't ride roughshod over my brother."

Mansell here broke in. Mansell was rather fond of summing up.

"It's like this. 'The Bull's' a gorgeous fellow, he loves Fernhurst, he wants to love everyone in it. But he does not understand our House. We are not going to sweat ourselves to win some rotten Gym Cup or House Fives;

we haven't time for that. We are amateurs. We play the hardest footer and the keenest cricket of all the houses, and that's where we stop. He wants us to train every minute, go for runs in the afternoon, do physical exercises before breakfast so as to become strong, clean-living Englishmen, who love their bodies and have some respect for their mind." (A roar of laughter. It was as though 'the Bull' were speaking.) "Well, I don't care a damn myself for my body or mind. All I know is that the House is going to get the Two Cock somehow, and that for six weeks we'll train like Hades, and then, when we've got the cup, we'll have a blind. We aren't pros who train the whole year round; we're amateurs!"

And Mansell was perhaps not far wrong.

"I say, you know," says Hunter, who had a cheerful way of suddenly flying off at a tangent, "talking of 'the Bull,' have you heard of the row in his house?"

Intense enthusiasm. Buller's was supposed to be "above suspicion."

"Oh, well, old Bull came round the dormitories last night and heard Peters and Fischer and some other lads talking the most arrant filth. He gave them all six in pyjamas on the spot, and Fischer is not going to be allowed to be house captain next year. Rather a jest, you know. Old Bull thought because his house was always in wonderful training that the spirit of innocence ruled over the place."

"Well, he must be an ass then," said Mansell. "Why, look at Richmore, and Parry; and even old Johnson has little respect for a bourgeois morality."

Mansell was rather pleased with the last phrase; he was not quite certain what it meant. G. K. Chesterton used it somewhere, probably in his apology for George IV. It sounded rather nice.

"Well, it's obvious that a blood must be a bit of a rip; and Buller's is merely an asylum for bloods!"

This rather perplexed Gordon. He ventured a question rather timidly: "But is it impossible for a blood to be a decent fellow?"

"Decent fellow?" cried Jeffries. "Who on earth has

said they were anything else ? Johnson's a simply glorious man. Only a bit fast ; and that doesn't matter much."

In a farewell lecture, Gordon's preparatory school master had given him to believe that it mattered a good deal, but he was doubtless old-fashioned. Times were changed ; Gordon had ceased to be shocked at what he heard ; he was learning what life was, and how strange and beautiful and ugly it was.

As the winter term drew to a close, Gordon grew more and more sure of himself. He had passed by nearly all the other new boys. Foster, it is true, had got on well according to his lights, and was on more than friendly terms with Evans, the school slow bowler. But he was not much liked by his equals. Rudd was looked on quite rightly as an absolute buffoon ; Collins got on fairly well, but was generally admitted to be a bit eccentric. Gordon was, without doubt, the pick of the crew. His position in form was a great help. Mansell's friends thought him a cheerful, amusing and respectable-looking person, and were quite pleased to have him about the place. Next term he was going to have a study with Jeffries. The Chief thought he had got on rather too quick. But he was usually among the first three in his form, and there was nothing definite to find fault with, and, after all, his friends were excellent fellows. There was nothing against them. Jeffries was genially selfish, always ready for a rag, a keen footballer, and had, like most other Public School boys, adopted a convenient broad-mindedness with regard to cribbing and other matters.

" If the master is such an arrant ass as to let you crib, it is his own lookout ; and, after all, we take the sporting chance."

Lovelace minor was rather a different sort of person. Very excitable, he despised and deceived most of the masters ; among his friends he was unimpeachably loyal. He loved games, but never took them sufficiently seriously to please " the Bull." He played for his own pleasure, not " the Bull's." He was a splendid companion.

Hunter was rather a nonentity ; his chief attraction was that he usually had the last bit of scandal at his finger-tips ;

he was safe to be consulted on any point of school politics. It was his boast that he had sufficient evidence to expel half the Fifteen and the whole Eleven.

At this time Gordon found school life inexpressibly joyful. There were minor troubles, but they were few. The only thing that really worried him was Corps Parade. This infliction occurred once every week, and for two hours Gordon passed through hell. He was in a recruits' section under a man from Rogers' house, who was a typical product of his house. He was oily, yellow and unpleasant to look upon. He also loathed Gordon. There was a feud between the men from Rogers' and the School House.

Rogers was the captain in command of the corps. To Gordon he seemed exactly like what Cicero must have been, loud, contentious, smashing down pasteboard castles with a terrific din. He was amazingly arrogant and conceited. In the pulpit and on the parade ground he was in his element. The School House had for years been notorious for their slackness on parade. In drill and musketry competitions they had invariably come out bottom, and Rogers hated them for it. It was indeed a great sight to see the School House half company at work. Everyone was fed to death, and took no pains to hide the fact. Once Rogers had said to the House colour-sergeant :

" Phillips, form up your men facing right."

Phillips looked round at them, thought for a second or two and then drawled : " Look here, you fellows, shove round there." And the subsequent sarcastic comment was quite lost on him. He was a good forward, but not too clever. He was proof against epigram.

It was truly a noble sight to see Lovelace minor come on parade. Every week exactly two seconds late, in the dead silence that followed the sergeant-major's thundered " Parade ! " he would dash through the school gate, puffing and blowing, his drum knocking against his equipment, his hat crooked, half his buttons undone. He would barge through two sections, rush to the School House half-company, bang his rifle on the ground, and say to his companion in a stage whisper : " I wasn't noticed, was I ? "

But these were only incidents. As a whole everything connected with the corps was "a hell upon earth." Field days consisted of a long march, a sublime mix-up, a speech from Rogers, a bad tea, then a long march home. No one knew what was happening; no one cared. It was a sheer waste of time. Only Rogers really enjoyed himself.

Then suddenly it occurred to Clarke that such a state of affairs was a disgrace to the House. He had just been made a colour-sergeant, and determined to wake things up. He made a long speech to the House, pointing out the necessity for National Service, the importance of militarism, and its effect on citizenship. He finished by a patriotic outburst, telling them that they were wearing the King's uniform, and that it must be kept clean, and the brass badges polished. The House was mildly interested; its attitude was summed up in Turner's remark:

"Well, the King's uniform will have to go buttonless as far as I am concerned, I'm afraid. Damned if I'll waste twopence to buy a rotten bone button."

On the next parade, however, Clarke inspected the company. Half the House had to call him the next morning, dressed properly, at seven o'clock. That would mean getting up at six-thirty. General consternation.

"It's a crying scandal," said Lovelace minor. "If I had not been reported for slacking at French I'd jolly well go and complain to the Chief. How can anyone play football without proper sleep?"

Gordon laughed from the depths of his arm-chair. There were advantages in being a recruit, even if one was ordered about by a man in Rogers' who didn't wash. Hunter and Jeffries raged furiously; they swore that they would not turn up. "Who is Clarke, damn his eyes, to take on the privileges of a brigadier-general? It's a House tradition that no one tries at parade."

Overnight Hunter was very full of rebellion; but seven o'clock saw him in shining brass, meekly standing before Clarke, who examined them from his bed with an electric torch. But Jeffries cut; he was ever "agin the government." He got six. His tunic was clean next week.

The House growled and cursed inwardly, but its appearance on parade was very different. Clarke was a man.

There is nothing so self-satisfying as to watch trouble from a safe distance. Gordon was thoroughly happy. Mansell cursed heavily every Monday night before the Tuesday parade. Clarke became to the House what Cromwell was to Ireland; even the feeble Davenham thought it was a bit thick. But Gordon was a recruit, and such things did not worry him. Life was just then amazingly exciting. He was developing into quite a useful forward. Mansell said he was certain for a place in the House Thirds side. He was high up in form, and there was a good chance of his getting a prize, but what perhaps counted more than anything else was the fact that he was getting a position in the House. Prefects had ceased to ask him what his name was. He was no longer a nonentity; he was looked on as a coming man.

As the term wore on, the thought of exams. brought to Gordon only a feeling of excitement. There was little likelihood of disaster; there was the certainty of a good struggle for the first place between himself and one Walford, a dull though industrious outhouse individual. But to some of his friends exams. seemed as the day of reckoning. Lovelace minor was frankly at his wits' end. He had slacked most abominably the whole term. He had prepared none of his books, and his next-door neighbour had supplied him with all necessary information. Now the news was about that IV. B was going to sit with the Sixth Form for exams. Terror reigned. There could be no cribbing under the Chief's nose. Jeffries was in the same plight; but he was a philosopher. "If I get bottled in every paper," he said, "it will only mean about two hours' work on each subject. But if I am going to know enough to avoid being bottled, it will mean a good eight hours' work at each subject: six hours wasted on each. In these times of bustle it can't be done. Caruthers, pass me that red-backed novel on the second shelf!"

Lovelace, however, was perturbed, and set out to prepare himself for the ordeal. But his was a temperament that

forbade application on any subject other than horse racing. Every night he paced up and down the study passages getting hints first from one person then another, and always staying for a talk. By the end of preparation the result was always the same—nothing done; and he and Jeffries both spent the last Saturday in exactly the same way.

But with Mansell it was different. If he got a promotion his pater had promised him a motor bike. At first sight this seemed impossible. Hunter in fact laid a hundred to one against his chances. But for once Mansell really tried at something besides games. For two halls he worked solidly from seven till ten, preparing small slips of paper that contained all the notes he could find in Gordon's note-book, and that could fit conveniently into the back of a watch. Everything was in his favour. Claremont was taking exams. The first paper was Old Testament history. Mansell looked at his watch repeatedly; but suddenly he came to an unexpected question. He endeavoured to extract an answer from the man on his right.

Claremont spotted him.

"Well, Mansell, if I ask you if you are cribbing, I know you will deny it, and I don't want you to tell me a lie; but I must beg of you not to talk quite so loudly."

Any ordinary master would have torn up the boy's paper. But Claremont was getting old.

At any rate for the rest of the exams. Mansell relied entirely on his notes. The Greek translation paper, however, was more than he could do. Promotion did not count on a set subject, but only on English and Latin; so Greek had gone by the board. After writing the most amazing nonsense for two hours, Mansell decided that it was wiser not to enter into competition at all with those low tricksters who had prepared their work. He showed up no papers at all.

Next day Claremont corrected the papers.

"Well, Mansell, I can't find your paper anywhere."

"I showed it up, sir."

"Well, I am sure I don't know where it is. You had

better go and find Mr Douglas, and ask him if he knows anything about it."

Mr Douglas was the mathematical master, to whom all marks were sent. He added them up, and made out the orders.

After an unnecessarily long interval Mansell returned.

"I am sorry, sir; Mr Douglas has not seen them."

"Well, I suppose it must be all my fault. I shall have to give you an average on your papers, which, strange to say, have been, for you, remarkably good."

Mansell was averaged sixth for the paper. A real good bluff gives more pleasure than all the honest exercises of one's life put together.

There was laughter in No. 16 Study that evening. A few weeks ago Gordon would have been horrified at such a thing; but now it seemed a splendid jest. He would not have cribbed himself. He preferred to beat a man with his own brains, though Mansell would have protested that it was a greater effort to pit one's brains against a master long trained in spotting tricks than against some dull-headed scholar. The Public School system, at any rate, teaches its sons the art of framing very ingenious theories with which to defend their faults; a negative virtue, perhaps, but none the less an achievement.

The last days of term were now drawing in. The House supper was only a few days off and the holidays very close. Everyone was glad on the whole to have finished the Christmas term, which is invariably the worst of the three. And this year it had not been improved by Clarke's military activities and the feeling of unrest that overhung the doings of the Fifteen, because of Lovelace major's never-ending broils with "the Bull." Two strong men both wanted their own way. On the whole, honours were even, though, if anything, slightly in Lovelace's favour, since he had filled up the scrum with a School House forward and a member of Benson's, a small and rather insignificant House, instead of giving the colours to men in Buller's.

But next term there would be fewer rows. There would be house matches, and each house captain would run

things in his own house as he wished. The school captain did little except post up which grounds each house was to occupy. The School House always longed for the Easter term. It was their chance of showing the rest of the school what they were made of. As they were slightly bigger than any other house, they claimed the honour of playing the three best of the outhouses in the great Three Cock House Match for the Senior Challenge Cup. This year, with Lovelace and Meredith, a School House victory was looked on as almost certain. Besides this big event there were the Two Cock and Thirds House Match. In the "Thirds" the School House under sixteen house side played against the two best of the outhouses under sixteen sides, for the Thirds Challenge Cup. And in the Two Cock, the second House Fifteen—that is, the House Fifteen minus those with first and second Fifteen colours—played the two best of the outhouse second Fifteens for the Junior Challenge Cup. The results of these last two matches were very much on the knees of the gods. The House stood a fair chance, but the general opinion was that Buller's would win the Thirds; and Christy's, a house that was full of average players who were too slack to get their seconds, would pull off the Two Cock. At any rate, there would be no lack of excitement. There was always far more keenness shown about house matches than school matches, a fact which worried Buller immensely. He thought everything should be secondary to the interests of Fernhurst.

On the last Saturday of the term there was the House Supper. It was a noble affair. The bloods came down in immaculate evening dress; even the untidiest junior had oiled his hair and put on a clean collar. At the Sixth Form table sat the Chief, some guests, Lovelace, Clarke, and a certain Ferguson, who edited *The Fernhurst School Magazine*, and was to propose the health of the old boys, of whom about twenty had come down, several having helped to defeat the school by twenty points to sixteen in the afternoon. Never had so much food been seen before. Turner had boasted that he always went into training a week before the event, so as to enjoy it more. But the

real triumph was the hot punch. As soon as dessert had begun the old boys trooped out, and brought in a huge steaming bowl of punch, from which they filled all the glasses. Gordon did not like it much. It seemed very hot and strong. But everyone else seemed to. Jeffries got a little excited.

Then speeches followed. The Chief proposed the fortune of the House, Clarke answered him. There was the usual applause and clapping. But the real event was Lovelace's speech. It had been a year of great success. The Three Cock had been lost by only a very small margin. The Two Cock had been won in a walk-over, and the Thirds by two points. The Senior Cricket and the Sports Cup had also been won. It was very nearly a record year. Lovelace made a great speech. He was received with terrific applause ; he congratulated the House on its performance ; he mentioned individual names ; and each one was the signal for a roar of cheering ; and then, at the end, he said :

" And now I have a message to the House from the old boys. Let us have the Three Cock Cup back again on the School House sideboard. It is the place where it should be, and that's the place where we are going to put it ! Gentlemen, The Three Cock ! "

Amid a deafening noise the toast was drunk, and a voice from the back yelled out : " Three cheers for Lovelace ! " His health, too, was drunk, and they sang *For he's a Jolly Good Fellow.*

After this all else seemed tame. Ferguson made a speech that was meant to be very funny, but rather missed fire. He had read *Dorian Gray* the whole of the evening before, underlining appropriate aphorisms. But to the average boy Oscar Wilde is (rather luckily perhaps) a little too advanced. The evening finished with *Auld Lang Syne.* Everyone stood on the table and roared himself hoarse. The score in damage was twenty plates broken beyond repair, sixteen punch glasses in fragments, fourteen cracked plates, two broken gas mantles. When the revellers had departed the hall looked rather gloomy, as probably

Nero's did when his guests fled after the murder of Britannicus.

Next morning there was early service for communicants. But the School House was entirely pagan. Hardly a man went. On Sunday there was a great feed in Study 16. Somehow or other ten people got packed into as many square feet of room. Gordon was there; and Mansell, of course; Collins came to act as general clown; Fitzroy, a small friend of Jeffries, sat in a far corner looking rather uncomfortable. Spence, Carey and Tiddy made up the number; the last were quite the ordinary Public School type, their conversation ran entirely on games, scandal and the work they had not done. Lovelace was mildly bored.

"It's pretty fair rot, you know. Here have I been fair sweating away at the exams. every minute of my time, and Jeffries, who has not done a stroke, is above me."

Jeffries was bottom but one.

"Oh, rotten luck," said Mansell. "You should do like me. Old fool Claremont said I had done damned well!"

"He hardly put it that way," came from Gordon; "but I believe Mansell has managed more or less to deceive the examiners."

"Oh, I say, that's a bit thick, you know," said Mansell. "Oh, damn, who is that at the door?"

There was a feeble knock. "Come in!" shouted at least six voices simultaneously.

Davenham came in looking rather frightened.

"I'm sorry. . . . Is Caruthers in here?"

"Yes, young fellow, he is."

"Oh, Caruthers, Meredith wants you!"

"Damn him," said Gordon. "What a nuisance these prefects are."

Very unwillingly he got up and strolled upstairs.

He was away rather a long time. After twenty minutes' absence he returned rather moodily.

"Hullo, at last; you've been the hell of a long time," said Hunter. "What did he want?"

"Oh, nothing; only something about my boxing subscription."

"Well, he took long enough about it, I must say. Was that all?"

"Of course. Cake, please, Fitzroy!"

The subject was dropped.

But just before chapel Jeffries ran into Gordon in the cloister.

"Look here, Caruthers, what did Meredith really want you for? I swear I won't tell anyone."

"Oh, well, I don't mind you knowing. . . . You know what Meredith is, well—I mean—oh, you know, the usual stuff. He wanted me to meet him out for a walk to-morrow. I told him in polite language to go to the 'devil.'"

"Good Lord, did you really? But why? If Meredith gets fed up with you he could give you the hell of a time."

"Oh, I know he could, but he wouldn't over a thing like that. Damn it all, the man is a gentleman."

"Of course he is, but all the same he is a blood, and it pays to keep on good terms with them."

"Oh, I don't know; it's risky—and well, I think the whole idea is damned silly nonsense."

Jeffries looked at him rather curiously.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose that is how the small boy always looks at it."

It was only for an hour or so, however, that Gordon let this affair worry him. The holidays were only forty-eight hours off and he was longing to hear the results of the exams., and to know whether he had a prize.

Prize-giving was always held at five o'clock on the last Monday. And the afternoon dragged by very slowly. Mansell assumed a cheerful indifference. He thought his motor bike fairly certain. Rumour had it there were going to be at least twelve promotions into the Lower Fifth. Jeffries and Lovelace had also nothing to worry about; there was little doubt as to their positions. Hunter specialised in chemistry, and had done no examination papers. But for Gordon the suspense was intolerable. He could find nothing to do; he climbed up the Abbey tower, and wrote his name on the big hand of the clock; he roped up

his playbox, tipped the school porter; and still there was an hour and a half to put in. Disconsolately he wandered down town. He strolled into Gisson's, the school bookseller's: it contained nothing but the Home University Library series and numerous Everymans. It was just like his first day over again. But at last five o'clock came, and he sat with his four friends at the back of the big schoolroom. He grew more and more tired of hearing the lists of the Second and Third Forms read out. What interest did he take in the doings of Pappenheim and Guttridge tertius? IV. A was reached at length. The list was read from the bottom.

Not placed—Hunter.

Slowly the names were read out; the single figures were now reached:

Mansell—term's work, eighteen. Exams., one. Combined order, four.

This difference of position caused a titter to run round among those of the School House who knew the cause of it. The third name and then the second was reached:

Caruthers—Term's work, one. Exams, three. Combined order, one.

Term's Prize—Caruthers. Exams.—Mansell.

The latter's performance was the signal for an uproarious outburst of applause, in which laughter played a large part. There was still more merriment when it was discovered that he had got as a prize *Sartor Resartus*. As he crudely put it: "What the bloody hell does it mean?" Gordon got *The Indian Mutiny*, by Malleson. Both books now repose, as do most prizes, in the owners' book-cases, unread.

"Congrats, Mansell, old fellow," yelled Lovelace minor, as the school poured out at the end of the prize-giving. "Glorious! What a School House triumph."

"Yes, you know," said Mansell. "But it doesn't seem quite fair, and I am damned if I want this book. It looks the most utter rot. I say, shall I give it to that little kid in Buller's, I forget his name, who was second? He looks a bit upset. Shall I, I say?"

"Don't be a silly fool, Mansell," said Lovelace major, who

happened to overhear the conversation. "You've just got the only prize you're ever likely to get for work; stick on to it."

The rest of the day was pure, unalloyed joy to Gordon. He rushed off after tea to wire the news home; then he sat in the gallery and listened to the concert. He had expected to enjoy it rather; but the seats were uncomfortable, the music too classical, and he soon stopped paying any attention to the choir, and began a long argument with Collins as to the composition of the Two Cock scrum.

The next morning as the train steamed out of Fernhurst, and he lay back in the carriage smoking a cigarette, outwardly with the air of a connoisseur, inwardly with the timid nervousness of a novice, he reflected that, in spite of the Rev. Rogers, school was a pretty decent sort of place.

CHAPTER IV

NEW FACES

"I SAY, it *is* true; Lovelace major has left."

"Good Lord, no; is it?"

"He's not on the House list?"

"I heard he'd passed into the army at last."

"I wonder who he was sitting next."

"And we shall have that silly ass Armour captain of the House."

"Ye gods!"

A small crowd had gathered in front of the studies on the first night of the Easter term. Consternation reigned. The almost impossible had happened. Lovelace major had passed into Sandhurst at his fifth attempt, and Armour would take his place as house captain. It was a disaster. Armour was doubtless a most worthy fellow, a thoroughly honest, hard-working forward. But he had no personality. When he passed by, fags did not suddenly stop talking, as they did when Clarke or Meredith rolled past them. The term before, he had not even been a house prefect. The Three Cock, which had once seemed such a certainty, now became a forlorn hope.

"It's rotten," said Lovelace minor that night in the dormitory. "My brother didn't think he had the very ghost of a chance of passing. He'd mucked it up four times running, only the silly ass had done both the unseens with "the Bull" the week before, and he was too damned slack to alter them, and write them down wrong. He always was an ass, my brother."

Everyone was sorry. Even "the Bull" regarded him with a sort of indulgent sentimentality. He never saw very much good in a School House captain as long as he

was there; but as soon as he left, all his faults were forgotten, and virtues that he had never possessed were flung at him in profusion. The result was that "the Bull" said to the School House captain of each generation: "I have had more trouble with you than any Fernhurst boy I have ever met. You can't see beyond the length of your own dining-hall. See big. See the importance of Fernhurst, and the insignificance of yourself."

But no one was more sorry than Armour. He did not want responsibility; he had not sought for it. He wished to have fought in the School House battles as a private, not as an officer. He loved the House, and longed for its success, and trembled to think that he might ruin its chances by a weak and vacillating captaincy. Moreover, he felt that he had no one to back him up. Meredith, Robey and Simonds, the other members of the First Fifteen in the House, were all grousing and wondering how large a score the outhouses would run up in the Three Cock. No one placed any confidence in his abilities. He was entirely alone.

The next day was pouring wet; the ground was under water. Most house captains would have sent their houses for a run. But Armour wanted to make his start as early as possible. He couldn't bear to delay. That afternoon the probable Thirds side played against the rest of the House, with the exception of the Second colours. Armour had never felt so nervous before; it was actually the first time he had refereed on a game. Jeffries was captain of the Thirds, and kicked off. It was, of course, a scrappy game. On such a day good football was impossible. The outsides hardly touched the ball once. But the forwards, covered in mud from head to foot, had their full share of work. Jeffries was ubiquitous; he led the "grovel" (as the scrum was called at Fernhurst), and kept it together. Gordon had very little chance of distinguishing himself; but he did one or two dribbles, and managed to collar Mansell the only time he looked like getting away. Lovelace minor, who played fly-half, had nothing to do except stop forward rushes, was kicked all over his body, got very

cold and never had a chance once. He was utterly miserable the whole hour. All this was in favour of Armour. He knew nothing about three-quarter work, but he had played forward ever since he had gone to the Fernhurst preparatory at ten years of age, and could always spot the worker and the slacker, which Lovelace major never could. On the whole, taking a house game was not so terrifying after all; by half-time he had forgotten his nervousness in his excitement at watching how his side was going to shape.

"You know, I don't think Armour so rotten as people said he would be," said Gordon, as they came up after the game. "I thought he was all right."

"Oh yes, he's not so bad; but he does not seem much when you shove him next to Lovelace major."

"Well, you know," said Jeffries, "he does know something about forward play, which I am damned if Lovelace did."

"Perhaps so; but all the same Lovelace was the man to win matches." Mansell was an outside, and loved dash and brilliance, but the forwards were not sorry to have someone in command who understood them. Armour had begun well.

There are still people who will maintain that the ideal schoolboy in school hours thinks only about Vergil and Sophocles, and in the field concentrates entirely on drop kicks and yorkers. But that boy does not exist; and in the Easter term it is impossible to think of anything but house matches. Those who were in the power of some form martinet had a terrible time this term. But Gordon and Mansell found themselves safely at rest in Claremont's form and Greek set, and made up their minds just to stay there and do only enough work to avoid being bottled.

For the Lower Fifth was certainly the refuge of many weather-beaten mariners. Pat Johnstone had laboriously worked up from the bottom form, led on only by the hope that one day he would reach V. B, and there repose at the back of the room, living his last terms in peace. Ruddock had once set out with high hopes of reaching the Sixth;

his first term he had won a Divinity prize in the Shell. But under Claremont he had discovered the truth, learnt long ago in the land of Lotus Eaters, "that slumber is more sweet than toil!" The back benches of that room were strewn with shattered hopes. Small intelligent scholars came up and passed by on their way to Balliol Scholarships; but the faces at the back of the room remained terribly somnolent and happy. A certain Banbury had been there for three years and had earned the nickname of "old Father Time," and Mansell, too, swore he would enrol himself with the Lost Legion, while even Gordon said that nothing would shift him from there for at least a year.

Claremont had many strange ideas, the most striking of which was the belief that boys felt a passionate love for poetry. The average boy has probably read all the poetry he will ever read terms before he ever reaches the Fifth Form. By the time he is in Shell he has learnt to appreciate Kipling, the more choice bits of *Don Juan* and a few plain-spoken passages in Shakespeare. If English Literature were taught differently, if he were led by stages from Macaulay to Scott, from Byron to Rossetti, he might perhaps appreciate the splendid heritage of song, but as it is, swung straight from *If* to the *Ode to the Nightingale* he finds the "shy beauty" of Keats most unutterable nonsense. Claremont, however, thought otherwise, and ran his form accordingly. In repetition this was especially noticeable. Kennedy, a small boy with glasses, who was always word-perfect, would nervously mumble through Henry V.'s speech (they always learnt Shakespeare) in an accurate but totally uninspired way. Mansell would stand at the back of the form and blunder out blank verse, much of which was his own, and little of which was Shakespeare, but which certainly sounded most impressive.

"Well, Kennedy," Claremont would say, "you certainly know your words very well, but I can't bear the way you say them. Five out of twenty. Mansell, you evidently have made little attempt to learn your repetition at all, but I love your fervour. One so rarely finds anyone really affected by the passion of poetry. Fifteen out of twenty."

During his two years in the Lower Fifth Mansell never once spent more than five minutes learning his "rep," yet on no occasion did he get less than twelve out of twenty. A bare outline was required, a loud voice supplied the rest.

In this form it was that Gordon first began to crib. He did not do it to get marks. He merely wished to avoid being "bottled." Some headmasters, and the writers to *The Boy's Own Paper*, draw lurid pictures of the bully who by cribbing steals the prize from the poor innocent who looks up every word in a big Liddell and Scott; but such people don't exist. No one ever cribbed in order to get a prize: they crib from mere slackness. Mansell's exam. prize in IV. A is about the only instance of a prize won by cribbing. Besides, cribbing is an art.

Ruddock, for instance, when he used to go on to translate, was accustomed to take up his Vergil in one hand and his Bohn in the other.

"What is that other book, Ruddock?" Claremont asked once.

"Some notes, sir," was the perfectly truthful answer.

Ruddock was, moreover, an altruist; he always worked for the good of his fellow-men. One day, when Mansell was bungling most abominably with his Euripides, he flung his Bohn along the desk, Mansell picked it up, propped it in front of him and read it off. Claremont never noticed. This was the start of a great system of combination. Everyone at the beginning of the term paid twopence to the general account with which Ruddock bought some *Short Steps to Accurate Translations*. As each person went on to translate, the book was passed to him and he read straight out of it. The translating was, in consequence, always of a remarkably high standard. Claremont never understood why examinations always proved the signal for a general collapse. History, however, was a subject that had long been a worry to the form. Dates are irrevocable facts and cannot be altered, they must be learnt. At one time, when Claremont said, "Shut your book. I will ask a few questions," everyone shut their Latin grammars loudly and kept their history books open; but this was rather too

obvious a ruse; Claremont began to spot it. Something had to be done. It would be an insult to expect any member of the form to prepare a lesson. It was Gordon who finally devised a plan.

"Please, sir," he said one day, "don't you think we should find history much more interesting if we could bring in maps."

"Well, perhaps it would," said Claremont sleepily. "I am sure the form is very much indebted to you for your kind thought. Anyone who wants to, may bring in a map."

Next day everyone had found a huge atlas which he propped up on the desk; and which completely hid everything except the student's actual head. There was now no fear of an open book being spotted, it was so very simple to shut it when Claremont began to walk about, and besides . . . it made the lesson so much more interesting.

And so Gordon and Mansell were able to discuss football the whole of evening hall, never do a stroke of work, and yet get quite a respectable half-term report.

The interest in the Thirds was now becoming intense. As was expected, Buller's easily beat all the outhouses, with Claremont's house as runners-up. Claremont's house had once been the great athletic house, but when a house master takes but little interest in a house's performances, that house is apt to get stale, and soon Claremont's became a name for mediocrity. As a house it was like V. B, a happy land where no one worried about anything, and it was quite safe to smoke in the studies on a Sunday afternoon. A side made up of two houses that had never played together before was bound to lack the combination of a side that had played together for several weeks. But the School House was always playing against superior weight and strength, and more than once had found itself unable to sustain their efforts, and after leading up to half-time went clean to pieces in the last ten minutes. It is pretty hard to hold a "grovel" several stones heavier for over an hour, and this year even Armour was a little doubtful about the lightness of his side. To Gordon and Jeffries, of course,

defeat seemed impossible. Last year Jeffries had played in a winning side and Gordon had yet to see the House lose a match. But Mansell smiled sadly ; he had played in a good many losing sides. Gordon dreamed football night and day. He saw himself securing wonderful last-minute tries, and bringing off amazing collars when all seemed lost. But all his hopes were doomed to disappointment. Two days before the game he slipped coming downstairs, fell with his wrist under him, and with his arm in splints and sling had to watch from the touch-line an outhouse victory of ten points to nothing. The usual thing happened —the House was just not strong enough. Jeffries played a great game, and fought an uphill fight splendidly ; Lovelace only missed a drop goal by inches ; Fletcher, an undisciplined forward, did great damage till warned by the referee. But weight told, and during the whole of the last half the House were penned in their twenty-five, while the school got over twice. Very miserably the House sat down to tea that evening. It added insult to injury when an impertinent fag from Buller's walked in in the middle and demanded the cup. Armour managed to keep his temper, but that fag did not forget for weeks the booting Gordon gave him the next day. Still it was a poor revenge for a lost cup.

Whatever little chance there had ever been of Gordon getting a place in the Two Cock was, of course, quite destroyed by his accident. The doctor said he ought not to play again for at least three weeks. And so it was that, as far as football was concerned, Gordon found himself rather out of it. All his friends were in the thick of everything. Mansell was captain of the Two Cock, Jeffries was leading the scrum, Hunter was being tried as scrum half, and Lovelace was in training as a reserve. He alone was doing nothing. For a few days the afternoons seemed unbearably long. But Gordon had a remarkable gift for adapting himself to circumstances. And he had very little difficulty in striking up new acquaintances. So far, he had had very little to do with those outside his actual set, with the majority of the House he was hardly on speaking

terms, and of Archie Fletcher he knew little except the name.

Archie Fletcher was a great person, "great" in fact was the only adjective that really fitted him. He had only two real objects in life, one was to get his House cap, the other was to enjoy himself. And his love of pleasure usually took the form of ragging masters. Ragging with him did not consist in mere spasmodic episodes of bravado which usually ended in a beating. He had reduced it to a science. It was to him the supreme art. At present he was suffering from a kick on the knee which he had received in the Thirds, and he and Gordon found themselves constantly thrown together.

Archie (no one ever called him anything else) was a splendid companion. He had an enormous repertoire of anecdotes which he was never tired of telling, and every one finished in exactly the same way: "Believe me, Caruthers, some rag." Oh, a great man, forsooth, was Archie! He had cynically examined every master with whom he had anything to do, picked him to pieces, found out his faults, and then played on his weaknesses. Sometimes, however, he went a little too far. On one occasion he was doing chemistry with a certain Jenks, a very fiery little man, who really believed in the educational value of "stinks." So did Archie; it gave him scope to exercise his genius for playing the fool. But this day he overstepped the bounds. In the distance he saw Blake, his pet aversion, carefully working out an experiment. A piece of glass tubing was at hand; Jenks was not looking; Archie fixed the tube to the waterspout, turned the tap; a cascade of H_2O rose in the air and fell on Blake's apparatus; there was a crash of falling glass. Jenks spun round.

"Oh, is that you, Fletcher, you stupid fellow? Come over here. I shall have to beat you. Now then, where's my cane gone! Oh, then I shall have to use some rubber tubing—stoop down, stoop down!"

Laboriously Archie bent down; Jenks bent a piece of india-rubber tubing double—its length was hardly a foot—and gave Archie a feeble blow. It could not possibly have

hurt him. But the victim leapt in the air, clutching the seat of his trousers.

"Oh!" he screamed. "Oh, sir, oh, sir! You have hurt me, sir. You are so strong, sir."

"Oh, then you are coward, too, are you?" said the delighted Jenks. "Stoop down again; stoop down!"

The form rocked with laughter.

Archie received four strokes in all, and after each he went through the same performance. Jenks thought himself a second Hercules; he repeated the story in the common room. Archie repeated it also in the studies: "Believe me, you fellows, some rag!"

A great man, and after Gordon's own heart! Ever since he had been free from the grip of the preparatory school he had learnt to loathe all masters in the abstract. They were all right in themselves; but as a whole they were to him essentially vile—inflictions that were none the less distasteful because they were necessary. If they had been unnecessary, there would have been a real cause for complaint. It is great fun being a martyr. But the theory of whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth gives little pleasure when one is being most deservedly birched. The authority of the schoolmaster was a nuisance, it was something to have fought it even in a small way. The subsequent report matters little. *Sat est Pugnasse.*

On a bleak, rainy afternoon Gordon and Fletcher watched the overwhelming defeat of the House in the Two Cock. The score was over thirty points; Mansell played only very moderately; Jeffries was quite off his game. A gloom settled down over the House, everyone became peevish and discontented. It was said that the great days of House footer were over. To lose both the Thirds and the Two Cock was a disgrace. No one expected anything but a rout in the Three Cock. There were bets in the day-room as to whether the score would be under fifty. Interest centred entirely on who would get their House caps. With Lovelace away, the three-quarter line would be innocuous: the forwards always had been weak. The House were bad losers, they had grown accustomed to victories.

CHAPTER V

EMERGING

"JEFFRIES was pretty hot stuff to-day, wasn't he?"

"Good Lord! yes. If he plays half as well as that in the Three Cock he'll get his House cap."

It was just after tea. Mansell was lying back in an easy-chair with his feet on the table; he was dead tired after a strenuous game. Gordon was sitting on the table. Hunter reclined in the window seat.

"Where is he, by the way?" said Gordon. "I didn't see him in to tea."

"Oh, I believe someone asked him out. Isn't he rather a pal of the Jacobs in Cheap Street?"

"I heard that there was a bit of a row on," said Hunter. "I couldn't quite make out what about. . . . Oh, by Jove, that's him."

Jeffries' voice was heard down the passage: "Mansell."

A voice answered him: "Here; No. 34."

Jeffries was heard running upstairs; he entered looking very dejected.

"Hullo! Cheer up!" shouted Mansell. "I shouldn't have thought you could have run like that after this afternoon's game. Where've you been?"

"I say . . . I'm in the deuce of a row."

There was a shriek of laughter. Jeffries was always in a row; and he always exaggerated its importance.

"Don't laugh. It's no damned joke. I've got bunked."

Silence suddenly fell on the group.

"But . . . what the hell have you been doing?"

"Oh, Chief's found out all about me and Fitzroy, and I've got to go!"

"But I never thought there was really anything in that," said Gordon. "I thought——"

"Oh, well, there was. I know I'm an awful swine and all that—— Oh, it's pretty damnable; and the Three Cock, too! I believe I should have got my House cap! . . . I wasn't so dusty to-day—and I heard Armour say, as he came off the field—— Damn, what the bloody hell does it matter what Armour said? It's over now. I just got across for a minute to see you men. . . . I said I wanted a book. . . . Lord, I can't believe it. . . ."

When he stopped speaking there was again a dead silence. None of the three had been brought face to face with such a tragedy before. Never, Gordon thought, had the Greek idea of Nemesis seemed so strong.

Hunter broke the silence.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. I shall go home, and then, I suppose, I shall have to go to France or Germany, or perhaps some crammer. I don't know or care . . . it's bound to be pretty rotten. . . ."

He half smiled.

"My God, and it's damned unfair," Mansell said suddenly. "There are jolly few of us here any better than you, and look at the bloods, every one of them as fast as the devil, and you have to go just because— — Oh, it's damned unfair."

Then Jeffries' wild anger, the anger that had made him so brilliant an athlete, burst out: "Unfair? Yes, that's the right word; it is unfair. Who made me what I am but Fernhurst? Two years ago I came here as innocent as Caruthers there; never knew anything. Fernhurst taught me everything; Fernhurst made me worship games, and think that they alone mattered, and everything else could go to the deuce. I heard men say about bloods whose lives were an open scandal, 'Oh, it's all right, they can play football.' I thought it was all right too. Fernhurst made me think it was. And now Fernhurst, that has made me what I am, turns round and says, 'You are not fit to be a member of this great school!' and I have to go. Oh, it's fair, isn't it?"

He dropped exhausted into a chair. After a pause he went on :

" Oh, well, it's no use grousing. I suppose if one hits length balls on the middle stump over square leg's head one must run the risk of being bowled ; and I didn't believe in sticking in and doing nothing. ' Get on or get out,' and, well, I've got out." He laughed rather hysterically.

Again silence.

Slowly Jeffries got up.

" Well, good-bye, you men." He shook hands. As he opened the door he paused for a second, laughed to himself : " Oh, it's funny, bloody funny," he murmured. " Not fit for Fernhurst. . . . Bloody funny." He laughed again, bitterly. The door closed slowly.

Jeffries' footsteps could be heard on the stairs. They grew fainter ; the door leading to the Chief's side of the House slammed. Down the study passage a gramophone struck up *Florrie was a Flapper.*

In Study 34 there was an awful stillness.

That evening on the way down to supper Gordon overheard Armour say to Meredith :

" What a fool that man Jeffries is, getting bunked, and mucking up the grovel. Damned ass, the man is."

Meredith agreed.

Gordon didn't care very much just now about the result of a House match. He had lost a friend. Armour had lost a cog in a machine.

As was expected, the Three Cock proved a terribly one-sided game. The House played pluckily, and for the first half kept the score down to eight points ; but during the last twenty minutes it was quite impossible to keep out the strong outhouse combination. The side became demoralised, and went absolutely to pieces. Armour did not give a single House cap.

After the Three Cock there was a period of four weeks during which the best athletes trained for the sports, while the rest of the school played hockey. It was generally considered a sort of holiday after the stress of house matches.

Usually it served its purpose well, but for the welfare of the House this year it was utterly disastrous. The whole house was in a highly strung, discontented state; it had nothing to work for; it had only failures to look back upon. The result was a general opposition to authority. For a week or so there was a continuous row going on in the studies. Window-frames were broken; chairs were smashed; nearly every day one or other member of the House was hauled before the Chief, for trouble of some sort. But things did not reach a real head till one night in hall, just before Palm Sunday. There was a lecture for the Sixth Form; Armour was taking hall; and the only prefect in the studies was Sandham, who had a headache and had got leave off the lecture. It did not take long for the good news to spread round the studies that only "the Cockroach" was about.

The first sign of trouble was a continual sound of opening doors. Archie was rushing round, stirring up strife; then there came a sound of many voices from the entrance of the studies, where were the fire hose and the gas meter. Suddenly the gas was turned out throughout the whole building, and pandemonium broke out.

It would be impossible to describe the tumult made by a whole house that was inspired by only one idea: the desire to make a noise. The voice of Sandham rose in a high-pitched wail over and again above the uproar; but it was pitch dark, he could see none of the offenders. Then all at once there was peace again, the lights went up, and everyone was quietly working in his study. It had been admirably worked out. Archie was "some" organiser.

For the time being the matter ended; but in a day or two rumours of the rebellion had reached Clarke. Strong steps had to be taken; and Clarke was not the man to shirk his duty.

That evening after prayers he got up and addressed the House.

"I have been told that two nights ago, when I was absent, there was a most unseemly uproar in the studies. I am not going into details; you all know quite well what

I mean. I want anyone who assisted in the disturbance to stand up."

There was not a move. The idea that the Public School boy's code of honour forces him to own up at once is entirely erroneous. Boys only own up when they are bound to be found out; they are not quixotic.

"Well, then, as no one has spoken, I shall have to take forcible measures. Everyone above IV. A (for the Lower School did their preparation in the day-room) will do me a hundred lines every day till the end of the term. Thank you."

That night there was loud cursing. Clarke had hardly a supporter, the other prefects, with the exception of Ferguson, who did not count for much in the way of things, agreed with Meredith, who said:

"If the Cockroach can't keep order, how can Clarke expect there should be absolute quiet? It's the Chief's fault for making such prefects. Damned silly, I call it."

The term did not end without a further row. There had been from time immemorial a system by which corps clothes were common property. Everyone flung them in the middle of the room on Tuesday after parade; the matron sorted them out after a fashion; but most people on the next Tuesday afternoon found themselves with two tunics and no trousers, or two hats and only one puttee. But no one cared. The person who had two tunics flung one in the middle of the floor, and then went in search of some spare trousers. Everyone was clothed somehow in the end. There were always enough clothes to go round. There were bound to be at least ten people who had got leave off. It was a convenient socialism.

But one day FitzMorris turned up on parade in a pair of footer shorts, a straw hat, and a First Eleven blazer. He was a bit of a nut, and finding his clothes gone, went on strangely garbed, merely out of curiosity to see what would happen. A good deal did happen.

As soon as the corps was dismissed there was a clothes inspection. And the garments of FitzMorris were found distributed on various bodies. Clarke again addressed the

House. Anyone in future discovered wearing anyone else's clothes would be severely dealt with. But the House was not to be outdone. Every single name was erased from every single piece of clothing : identification was impossible. FitzMorris turned up at the next parade with one puttee missing, and a tunic that could not meet across his chest. There was another inspection, but this time it revealed nothing. Everyone swore that he was wearing his own clothes ; there was nothing to prove that he was not. For the time Clarke was discomfited.

FitzMorris set out on his Easter holidays contented with himself and the world, in the firm belief that he had thoroughly squashed that blighter Clarke. The head of the House returned to his lonely home on the moors, very thoughtful—the next term would be his last.

On the first Sunday of the summer term the Chief preached a sermon the effect of which Gordon never forgot. He was speaking on the subject of memory and remorse. " It may be in a few months," he said, " it may be not for three or four years ; but at any rate before very long, you will each one of you have to stand on the threshold of life, and looking back you will have to decide whether you have made the best of your Fernhurst days. For a few moments I ask you to imagine that it is your last day at school. How will it feel if you have to look back and think only of shattered hopes, of bright unfulfilled promises ? Your last day is bound to be one of infinite pathos. But to the pathos of human sorrow there is no need to add the pathos of failure. Oh, I know you are many of you saying to yourselves : 'There is heaps of time. We'll enjoy ourselves while we have the chance. It is not for so very long ! ' No, you are right there : it is not for so very long ; it is only a few hours before you will have to weigh in the balance the good and the bad you have done during your Fernhurst days. For some of you it will be in a few weeks ; but for the youngest of you it cannot be more than a very few years. Let me beg each of you . . . " The sermon followed on traditional lines.

Almost subconsciously Gordon rose with the others to

sing: *Lord, behold us with Thy Blessing.* . . . What would it feel like to him if this were his last Sunday, and he had to own that his school career were a failure? He sat quite quiet in his study thinking for a long time afterwards. He had a study alone this term.

In the big study that it has ever been the privilege of the head of the House to own, Clarke also sat very silent. He was nerving himself for a great struggle.

To the average individual the summer term is anything but the heaven it is usually imagined to be. The footer man hates it; the fag has to field all day on a house game and always goes in last; there is early school; in some houses no hot baths. On the first day the studies are loud with murmurs of:

"Oh! this rotten summer term."

"No spare time, and cricket."

"Awful!"

For Fernhurst was a footer school pure and simple. Buller had captained England against Wales, and had infused much of his own enthusiasm into his Fifteen; but the cricket coach, a Somerset professional, lacked "the Bull's" personality and force, and so for the last few years the doings of the Eleven had been slight and unmeritable. Even Lovelace major had been unable to carry a whole side on his shoulders. As soon as he was out the school ceased to take any interest in the game. Fernhurst batting was of the stolid, lifeless type, and showed an almost mechanical subservience to the bowling.

But for Gordon this term was sheer joy. He loved cricket passionately—last season at his preparatory school he had headed the batting averages, and kept wicket with a certain measure of success. As a bat he was reckless in the extreme; time after time he flung away his wicket, trying to cut straight balls past point; he was the despair of anyone who tried to coach him; but he managed to get runs.

For cricket the School House was divided into A-K and L-Z, according to which division the names of the boys

fell into. Meredith was captain of the House and of L-Z, while FitzMorris captained A-K. For the first half of the term there were Junior House Single-Innings matches played in the American method, and afterwards came the Two-Innings Senior matches on the knock-out system. A-K Junior this year had quite a decent side. Foster was not at all a bad slow bowler, and was known to have made runs. Collins had a useful but unorthodox shot which he applied to every ball, no matter where it pitched, and which landed the ball either over shortslip's head or over the long-on boundary. In the nets it was a hideous performance, but in Junior House matches, where runs are the one consideration, it was extremely useful. A certain Betteridge captained the side, not because of any personal attainments, but merely because he was on the V. A table, and had played in Junior House matches with consistent results for three years. He went in tenth and sometimes bowled.

These matches began at once, as Stewart, the captain of the Eleven, was anxious to spot useful men for the Colts sixteen or under sixteen side, who wore white caps with a blue dragon worked on them. And so on the second Saturday of the term A-K drew Buller's in the first round. Before the game FitzMorris had the whole side in his study to fix the positions in the field. Some of the side had played little serious cricket before. Brown, in fact, asked if he might field middle and leg. But at last they were placed more or less to their own satisfaction, and FitzMorris gave them a short " jaw " on keenness. Cricket was about the one thing he really cared for; he, as a chemistry specialist, spent most of his day asleep in the laboratory. It was only in the cricket field that he really woke up.

With great solemnity Betteridge walked forward to toss with Felsted, the Buller's captain. A few seconds later he returned to announce that Buller's had won the toss and put them in. The captain of a Junior House side is always very fond of putting the other side in first. P. F. Warner would demand rain overnight, a drying ground, a fast wind and a baking sun before he would dare do such a thing. But Felsted was made of sterner stuff.

Gordon was sent in first with Collins. The idea was to try and knock the bowlers off their length early. Gordon was very nervous. "The Bull" was umpire at one end and FitzMorris at the other. Meredith had strolled over to watch, as L-Z had drawn a bye. Mansell was in the pavilion eating an ice. All eyes seemed on him. He had made Collins take the first ball. The start was worthy of the best School House traditions. The first ball was well outside the off-stump; it landed in the National School grounds that ran alongside of the school field. A howl of untuneful applause went up. This was the cricket anyone could appreciate, and this was the cricket that was always seen on a School House game. The only drawback to it was that it couldn't last. Collins made a few more daring strokes. In the second over he made a superb drive over shortslip's head to the boundary, and his next shot nearly ended FitzMorris' somnolent existence. It was great while it lasted, but, like all great things, it came to an end. He gave the simplest of chances to cover point, and Buller's rarely missed their catches.

It was so with nearly all the other members of the side. Three or four terrific hits and then back under the trees again. Gordon alone seemed at all comfortable. Either the novelty of the surroundings (it was only his second innings at Fernhurst), or else the presence of "the Bull," quieted his customary recklessness. At any rate, he attempted no leg-glides on the off-stump, and in consequence found little difficulty in staying in. The boundaries, as was natural on a side ground, were quite close. Runs came quite easily. During the interval after Foster's dismissal "the Bull" walked across to him:

"How old are you, Caruthers?"

"Thirteen and a half, sir."

"Oh, good thing to come young. I did myself. Keep that left foot well across and you'll stop in all day. Well done. Stick to it."

Gordon was amazingly bucked up. He had always heard "the Bull" was anti-School House, and here he was encouraging one of his enemies. What rot fellows did

talk. Splendid man " the Bull " ! He would tell Mansell so that night.

And his opinion was even more strengthened when, after he had been clean bowled for forty-three without a chance, " the Bull " stopped him on the way out and said :

" Well done, Caruthers ! Plucky knock. Go and have a tea at the tuck-shop, and put it down to my account."

The School House innings closed for one hundred and forty-eight. " Nothing like big enough," said Foster.

FitzMorris overheard him.

" Rot ! Absolute rot ! If you go on the field in that spirit you won't get a single man out. Go in and win."

And a very fine fight the House put up. Foster bowled splendidly, Betteridge was fast asleep at point and brought off a marvellous one-handed catch, while Gordon stumped Felsted in his third over. After an hour's play seven men were out for about ninety. The scorers were at variance, so the exact score could not be discovered. There seemed a reasonable chance of winning. And to his dying day Gordon will maintain that they would have won but for that silly ass of an umpire, FitzMorris. Bridges, the Buller's wicket-keep, was run out by yards ; there was no doubt about it. Everyone saw it. But long hours at the laboratory had made it very hard for FitzMorris to concentrate his brain on anything for a long time ; he was happily dreaming, let us hope, of carbon bisulphate, when the roar, " How's that ? " woke him up. He had to give the man " not out " ; there was nothing else to do. Twenty minutes later, with a scandalous scythe-stroke, Bridges made the winning hit.

" Never mind, your men put up a good fight ; the luck was all on our side," said " the Bull " to Caruthers. " Let's see, it's Sunday to-morrow, isn't it ? Well, on Monday, then, come round to the nets ; you want to practise getting that left foot across. Look here, just get your bat and I'll toss you up one or two now at the nets ! "

That night " the Bull," talking over the game with his side in the dormitories, said : " That Caruthers, you know,

he's a good man ; sort of fellow we want in the school. Can fight an uphill game. Got grit. He'll make a lot of runs for the school some day."

On Monday Gordon saw his name down for nets with the Colts Eleven. Life was good just then. If only Jeffries were there too. . . .

CHAPTER VI

CLARKE

"FERGUSON, the House is getting jolly slack; something's got to be done."

Ferguson sat up in his chair. Clarke had been quiet nearly the whole of hall; there was obviously something up.

"Oh, I don't know. Why, only a quarter of an hour ago I came across Collins and Brown playing stump cricket in the cloisters instead of studying Thucydides. That's what I call keenness."

"What did you say to them?"

"Oh, I've forgotten now, but it was something rather brilliant. I know it was quite lost on them. The Shell can't appreciate epigram. They ought to read more Wilde. Great book *Intentions*. Ever read it, Clarke?"

"Oh, confound your Wildes and Shaws; that's just what I object to. Here are these kids, who ought to be working, simply wasting their time, thinking of nothing but games. Why, I was up in the House tutor's room last night and was glancing down the list of form orders. Over half the House was in double figures."

"But, my good man, why worry? As long as the lads keep quiet in hall, and leave us in peace, what does it matter? Peace at any price, that's what I say; we get so little of it in this world, let us hang on to the little we have got."

"But look what a name the House will get."

"The House will get much the same reputation in the school as England has in Europe. The English as a whole are pleasure-loving and slack. They worship games; and, after all, the Englishman is a jolly sight better fellow than the average German or Frenchman."

"Yes, of course he's a better fellow, but the rotten thing is that he might be a much better fellow still. If as a country we had only ourselves to think about, let us put up a god of sport. But we have not. We have to compete with the other nations of the world. And late cuts are precious little use in commerce. This athleticism is ruining the country. At any rate, I am not going to have it in the House. In hall they've got to work; and if their places in form aren't better next week there's going to be trouble."

"Yes, there'll most certainly be trouble. I can't think why you won't leave well alone. Lord Henry Wootton used to say——"

But Clarke was paying no attention.

That evening he got up after prayers to address the House.

"Will nothing stop this fellow's love of oratory?" murmured Betteridge.

"I have to speak to the House on a subject which I consider important," began Clarke. ("Which probably means that it's most damnable nonsense," whispered Mansell.) "The position of the members of the House in form order is not at all creditable. In future every week the senior member of each form will bring me a list with the places of each School House member of the form on it. I intend to deal severely with anyone I find consistently low. I hope, however, that I shall not have need to. This is the best house socially and athletically; there is no reason why we should not be the best house at work too."

"As I prophesied," said Mansell, "most damnable nonsense!"

On the Second and Third Forms this speech had a considerable effect. For the first time in his life Cockburn did some work, and at the end of the week he was able to announce that he had gone up two places—from seventeenth to fifteenth. There were seventeen in the form.

The Shell and the Lower Fourth were, of course, too old to consider the possibility of actually working. It was a preposterous idea. Something had to be done, however,

so Collins bought excellent translations of the works of Vergil and Xenophon. A vote of thanks proposed by Foster and seconded by Brown was very properly carried *nem. con.*

But in V. B and IV. A there were some strong, rebellious spirits who would not bow down under any tyranny. In Study No. 1, at the end of the passage on the lower landing, Mansell addressed a meeting of delegates with great fervour.

"From time immemorial," he thundered out, "it has been the privilege of the members of this House" (he had been reading *John Bull* the day before) "to enjoy themselves, to work if they wanted to, to smoke if they wanted to, to do any damned thing they wanted to. The only thing they'd got to do was to play like hell in the Easter term, and here's that —— Clarke trying to make us do work, and, what is more, to work for Claremont! Gentlemen, let us stand by our traditions." (Mr Bottomley is useful at times.)

"That's all very jolly," said the practical Farrow, "but what are you doing?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter what we do, as long as we stand up for rights. Who ever heard of School House men working?"

"Now look here, my good fellows," said the ingenious Archie, "it's quite simple, if you will only do as I tell you. Clarke told us to bring him a form list; the obvious thing to do is not to bring one at all."

"But, you silly ass, the fellow who ought to have brought it will get into the very Hades of a row."

"Exactly. But who is the responsible person? Clarke said the senior man. Well, now, in IV. A I am, as far as work is concerned, the senior man in the form. But Hasel has been in the form a term longer than me, while Farrow, a most arrant idiot, who has only just reached the form, has been in the House a year longer than either of us. There is no senior man. We have all excellent claims to the position, but we waive them in favour of our inferiors."

Archie was at once acclaimed as the Napoleon of deceit. That week Clarke found no form order either from IV. A

of V. B. After prayers that evening he asked to see all those in IV. A and V. B.

When the conspirators arrived at his study Clarke found that everything had been elaborately prepared. There was not a single hitch in the argument. No one was at fault. There had been a general misunderstanding. They were, of course, very sorry. Clarke listened in silence.

"Well, I'm sorry this has happened. But when I say that I want a thing done, I expect it to be done. None of you are to blame particularly; but you are all equally guilty. I shall be forced to cane the lot of you."

There was a gasp. They had known Clarke was a strong man, but they had hardly expected this. Mansell was indignant.

"But look here, Clarke, you can't beat me, I'm a House cap."

"Can't I?"

"It has been a House tradition for years that a House cap can't be beaten."

"I am sorry, Mansell, but I have little respect for traditions. Will you all wait for me in the Sixth Form room?"

"All right, I shall go to the Chief then."

"I don't think you will, Mansell."

The Chief was not very fond of receiving complaints about his House prefects.

It was, of course, obvious that Clarke, when he had started on a job like this, had to carry it through. If he had gone back, his position would have been impossible; but there could be no doubt that it was a disastrous campaign as far as the unity of the House was concerned. At once the House was divided into sides, and nearly the whole of the Sixth Form was against Clarke.

"It's not the duty of the head of the House to see how people are working. That is a House master's job," pointed out FitzMorris. "All Clarke has got to do is to see that the kids don't rag in hall, and at other times more or less behave themselves."

The House was in a state of open rebellion.

And the worst of it was that none of the other prefects

made any attempt to keep order. Now there was a rule that in hall only three people might be allowed in one study, the idea being that, if more got in, work would be bound to change into conversation. One evening, however, a huge crowd slowly congregated in Mansell's study. Lovelace dropped in to borrow a book, and stayed. Hunter and Gordon came for a chat, and stayed too. Archie Fletcher had, as was usual with him, done all his preparation in half-an-hour, and was in search of something to do. Betteridge heard a noise outside, walked in, and stopped to give his opinion on the chances of A-K beating L-Z that week. In a few minutes the conversation got rather heated. The noise could be heard all down the passage.

Meredith came down to see what was going on.

"Ah, 'some' party! Well, Mansell, got over your beating yet?"

There was subdued laughter.

"I say, Meredith, have A-K the slightest chance of beating us on Thursday?" Lovelace was captain of L-Z Junior, and had laid rather heavily on a victory.

"Of course not, my good man, I'm going to umpire."

This time the laughter was not subdued.

In his retreat at the far end of the studies Clarke heard it. Down the passage he thundered, knocked at the door, and came in.

"What's the meaning of this? You know quite well that not more than three are allowed in here at one time. Come to my study, the lot of you."

All this time Meredith was being jammed behind the door.

"When you have quite finished, Clarke," he said.

"I am sorry, Meredith. Are you responsible for this?"

"In a way, yes. I was rather afraid that the House was getting slack about their work. A very bad thing for a house, Clarke! So I took this opportunity of holding a little viva voce examination. We were studying 'The Sermon on the Mount,' a singularly beautiful and impressive passage, Clarke! Have you read it?"

Clarke had read it that day as the lesson in chapel. He had also read it rather badly, having a cold in his head.

"You seem to have rather a large class, Meredith," he said sarcastically.

"Yes; like our good Lord, I have beaten the by-ways and the hedges, and I am almost afraid I shall also have to beat Mansell. He has singularly failed to appreciate the full meaning of that passage about 'humility.'"

Clarke saw he was beaten, and turned away. As he walked down the passage he heard a roar of laughter coming from Study No. 1.

The story was all round the House in half-an-hour, and on his way down to prayers Clarke heard FitzMorris say before a whole crowd:

"Oh, Meredith, you are a great fellow. That's the way to keep these upstarts in order."

That night there was merriment in the games study, and Ferguson advised Clarke to let the matter drop.

"After all, you know, it's not your business."

And perhaps Clarke realised that Ferguson was for once right. But he had to go on; it was very hard, though. He had been quite popular before he was head of the House. He wished he had left a year ago. For it is hard to be hated where one loves. And Clarke, well as he loved Fernhurst, loved the House a hundred times more.

"Well played, Caruthers; jolly good knock."

"Caruthers, well done!"

Lovelace and Mansell banged excitedly into Gordon's study the evening after the Colts match *v.* Murchester. Gordon had made thirty-seven on a wet wicket, and a defeat by over a hundred runs was no fault of his. He had gone in first wicket down, and stayed till the close.

"It was splendid! You ought to be a cert. for your Colts' cap. 'The Bull' was fearfully bucked."

"Oh, I don't know; it was not so very much." In his heart of hearts Gordon was pretty certain he would get his cap; but it would never do to show what he thought.

"Oh, rot, my good man," burst out Lovelace. "You didn't give a chance after the first over. And, by Jove, that was a bit of luck then."

"Yes; you know, I have a good deal of luck one way and another. I haven't got in a single row yet; and I am always being missed."

"And some fellows have no luck at all. Now Foster was batting beautifully before he was run out; never saw such a scandalous mix-up. All the other man's fault. He bowled well, too. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't get his Colts' cap. I know 'the Bull' likes him."

"Do you think so?" said Gordon. He did not know why, but he rather hoped Foster would not get his cap. He himself would be captain of A-K Junior next year. It would be better if he was obviously senior to Foster. He was going to be the match-winning factor; and, so far as seniority goes, there is not much to choose between men who get their colours on the same day.

"Of course he won't if you don't," Mansell said, "but I think he's worth it. I say, let's have a feed to-night. There's just time before hall to order some stuff. Lovelace, rush off to the tuck-shop, and put it down to my account."

Gordon found it impossible to work during hall; he fidgeted nervously. He felt as he had felt on the last day of his first term before prize-giving. He knew if he was going to get his Colts' cap he would get it early that night. Stewart always gave colours during first hall. He sat and waited nervously; work became quite impossible. He looked through *The Daily Telegraph* and flung it aside; then picked up *The London Mail*; that was rather more in his line.

There was a sound of talking down the passage. He heard Clarke's voice saying:

"Yes, down there, third study down, No. 16."

A second later there was a knock on the door. He managed to gulp out: "Come in."

"Gratters on your Colts' cap, Caruthers. Well played!"

Stewart shook hands with him. The next minute Gordon heard him walking to the school notice-board in the cloister. He was pinning up the notice.

Gordon sat quite still; his happiness was too great. . . .

No one is allowed to walk about in the studies before eight dining-hall. For a quarter of an hour there was silence in the passage.

Eight struck ; there was an opening of doors.

A few minutes later Hunter dashed in.

" Well done, Caruthers. Hooray ! "

" Well done, Caruthers ! " " Good old A-K ! " " I am so glad ! " Everyone seemed pleased.

Just before prayers, as he sat at the top of the day-room table, FitzMorris came over to him. " Jolly good, Caruthers. Well done." His cup was full.

Foster did not get his cap. . . .

The next day as Gordon was walking across the courts in break " the Bull " came up to him.

" Gratters, Caruthers ; wasn't your fault you lost. I like a man who can fight uphill. You have got the grit—well done, lad."

" And yet," said Gordon to Mansell, as they passed under the school gate, " you say that man cares only for his house. Why, he only loves his house because it's a part of Fernhurst ; and Fernhurst is the passion of his life ! "

CHAPTER VII

WHEN ONE IS IN ROME . . .

GENERALISATIONS are always apt to be misleading, but there was surely no truer one ever spoken than the old proverb: "When one is in Rome, one does as Rome does!" Parsons and godmothers will, of course, protest that, if you found yourselves among a crowd of robbers and drunkards, you would not copy *them*! And yet it is precisely what the average individual would do. When a boy leaves his preparatory school he has a conscience; he would not tell lies; he would be scrupulously honest in form; he would not borrow things he never meant to return; he would say nothing he would be ashamed of his mother or sister overhearing.

But before this same innocent has been at school two terms he has learnt that everything except money is public property. The name in a book or on a hockey stick means nothing. Someone once said to Collins:

"I say, I want to write here, are those your books?"

"No; they are the books I use," was the laconic answer.

The code of a Public School boy's honour is very elastic. Masters are regarded as common enemies; and it is never necessary to tell them the truth. Expediency is the golden rule in all relations with the common room. And after a very few weeks even Congreve would have had to own that the timid new boy would spin quite as broad a yarn as he could. The parents do not realise this. It is just as well. It is a stage in the development of youth. Everyone must pass through it. Yet sometimes it leads to quite a lot of misunderstanding.

There were one or two incidents during this summer term that stood out very clearly in Gordon's memory as proofs

of the way masters may fail to realise the boy's point of view.

One morning just after breakfast Gordon discovered that he had done the wrong maths for Jenks. He rushed in search of Fletcher.

"I say, Archie, look here, be a sport. I have done the wrong stuff for that ass Jenks. Let's have a look at yours."

In ten minutes four tremendous howlers in as many sums had been reproduced on Gordon's paper. The work was collected that morning, and nothing more was heard of it till the next day. Gordon thought himself quite safe and had ceased to take any interest in the matter. The form was working out some riders more or less quietly. Suddenly Jenks's tired voice murmured :

"Caruthers, did you copy your algebra off Fletcher ? "

"No, sir."

Jenks was rather fond of asking such leading questions.

Caruthers had got rather tired of it The man was a fool ; he must know by this time that he was bound to get the same answer.

"Fletcher, did you copy off Caruthers ? "

"No, sir."

"Caruthers, did you see Fletcher's paper ? "

"No, sir."

How insistent the ass was getting.

"Fletcher, did you see Caruthers's paper ? "

"No, sir."

"Oh, you silly fellows. Then I shall have to put both your papers before the Headmaster. I'm afraid you will both be expelled."

Jenks had a strange notion of the offences that merited expulsion. Every time he reported a boy he expected to see him marching sadly to the station to catch the afternoon train. Once Collins had stuck a pin into a wonderful mercury apparatus and entirely ruined it.

"Oh, Collins, you stupid boy. I shall have to report you to the Headmaster, and you know what that means. We sha'n't see you here any more."

Gordon had, of course, not the slightest fear of getting

"bunked." But still it was a nuisance. He would have to be more careful next time.

"Now look here, you two," Jenks went on, after a bit. "If either of you cares to own up, I won't report you at all. I will deal with you myself."

Slowly Gordon rose. It was obviously an occasion where it paid to own up.

"I did, sir."

"Oh, I thought as much. You see yours was in pencil, and if possible a little worse than Fletcher's. Sit down."

Betteridge afterwards said that to watch Jenks rushing across the courts to see the Chief during the minute interval between the exit of one class and the arrival of the next was better than any pantomime. He was very small; he had a large white moustache; his gown was too long; it blew out like sails in the wind. Besides, it was the first time Jenks had ever been seen to run.

In due time Caruthers and Fletcher appeared before the Chief. The result was only a long "jaw" and a bad report. The Chief could not perhaps be expected to see that a lie was any the less a lie because it was told to a master. But in the delinquents any feeling of penitence there might have been was entirely obscured by an utter scorn of Jenks.

"After all, the man did say he wouldn't report us," said Fletcher.

"Oh, it's all you can expect from these 'stinks men.' They have no sense of honour."

It did not occur to Gordon that in this instance his own sense of honour had not been tremendously in evidence. The Public School system had set its mark on him.

The other incident was the great clothes row. All rows spring from the most futile sources. This one began with the sickness of one Evans-Smith, who was suddenly taken ill in form. It was a hot day, and he fainted. Now Evans-Smith was an absolute nonentity. It was only his second term, but he had already learnt that anything that was in the changing-room was common property; and so when the matron took off his shoes before putting him to bed she saw Rudd's name inside. The matter was reported to the

Chief. The Chief made a tour of the changing-room during afternoon school, and his eyes were opened. For instance, it was quite obvious that Turner had changed. His school suit was hung on his peg, his blazer was presumably on him, and yet his cricket trousers were lying on the floor, with Fischer's house scarf sticking out of the pocket. There were many other like discoveries.

In hall that night the Chief asked Turner whose trousers he was wearing that afternoon. The wretched youth had not the slightest idea ; all he knew was that they were not his own. He thought they might be Bradford's.

After prayers the Chief addressed the House on the subject. He pointed out how carelessness in little things led to carelessness in greater, and how dangerous it was to get into a habit of taking other people's things without thinking. He also said that it was most unhealthy to wear someone else's clothes. He was, of course, quite right ; but the House could not see it, for the simple reason that it did not want to see it. It would be an awful nuisance to have to look after one's own things. Besides, probably the man next to you had a much newer sweater. The House intended to go on as before. And indeed it did.

One day Ferguson thought he wanted some exercise. It was a half-holiday, and Clarke was quite ready for a game of tennis. Ferguson went down to the changing-room. The first thing he saw was that his tennis shoes were gone. He thought it quite impossible that anyone should dare to bag his things. Fuming with wrath, he banged into the matron's room.

" I say, Matron, look here ; my tennis shoes are gone."

And then, suddenly, he saw the Chief standing at the other end of the room, glancing down the dormitory list.

" Oh, really, Ferguson, I must see about this. Matron, do you know anything about Ferguson's shoes ? "

" No, sir ! Never touch the boys' shoes. George is the only person who looks after them ; and he only cleans *black* boots and shoes."

" Oh, well, then, Ferguson, you'd better come with me, and we will make a search for them."

Ferguson cursed inwardly. This would mean at least half-an-hour wasted; and he could so easily have found another pair. The School House changing-room is a noble affair. It is about seventy feet long and sixty wide. All round it run small partitioned-off benches; in the middle are stands for corps clothes. At one end there is what was once a piano. Laboriously the Chief and Ferguson hunted round the room. In the far corner there was an airing cupboard. It was a great sight to see Ferguson climb up on the top of this. He was not a great gymnast, and he took some time doing it. Hunter sat changing at one end of the room, thoroughly enjoying himself.

Down the passage a loud, tuneless voice began to sing *Who were You with Last Night?* and Mansell rolled in. He saw the Chief, and stopped suddenly, going over to Hunter.

"What does the old idiot want?"

"He's hunting for Ferguson's tennis shoes."

"Good Lord! and I've got them on."

"Well, get them off, then, quick."

In a second, while the Chief was looking the other way, Mansell stole across to the middle of the room and laid them on the top of the hot-water pipes.

About two minutes later Ferguson burst out:

"Look, sir, here they are!"

"But, my dear Ferguson, I'm sure we must have looked there."

"Yes, sir. I thought we had."

"Er, 't any rate there are your shoes, Ferguson, and I hope you'll have a good game!" The Chief went out, rather annoyed at having wasted so much time. At tea that evening there was mirth at the V. B table.

On this occasion trouble was avoided. But one day Willing, a new boy, lost his corps hat. He was certain it had been there before lunch. The Corps Parade was already falling in. Seeing no other hat to fit him, he very idiotically went on without a hat at all. It would have been far better to have cut parade altogether. Clarke asked him where his hat was, but his ideas on the subject were very nebulous. The whole corps was kept waiting while School House hats

were examined. Ten people had got hats other than their own.

They each got a Georgic. . . .

The pent-up fury of the House now broke loose. Everyone swore he would murder Clarke on the last day, bag his clothes, and hold him in a cold bath for half-an-hour. If half of the things that were going to be done on the last day ever happened, how very few heads of houses would live to tell the tale! It is so easy to talk, so very hard to do anything; a head of the House is absolutely supreme. If he is at all sensitive, it is possible to make his life utterly wretched by silent demonstration of hatred. But if he is at all a man, threats can never mature, and Clarke was a man. During his last days at Fernhurst he was supremely miserable. The House was split up into factions: he himself had no one to talk to except Ferguson and Sandham. But he carried on the grim joke to its completion. In the last week he beat four boys for being low in form, and gave a whole dormitory a hundred lines daily till the end of the term for talking after lights out. The Chief was sorry to lose him; Ferguson would make a very weak head. The future was not too bright.

"I say, you know, I think I had better get a 'budge' this term." Gordon announced this fact as the Lower Fifth were pretending to prepare for the exam. Mansell protested:

"Now don't be a damned ass, my good man; you don't know when you are well off. You stop with old Methuselah a bit longer. He is a most damnable ass, but his form is a glorious slack."

"Oh, well, I don't know. I think the Sixth is slacker still. I am going to specialise in something when I get there. I am not quite sure what. But it's going to mean a lot of study hours."

At Fernhurst there was a great scheme by which specialists always worked in their studies. To specialise was the dream of every School House boy. It is so charming to watch, from the warm repose of your own study, black

figures rushing across the rain-swept courts on the way to their class-rooms (it always rained at Fernhurst), and Gordon was essentially a hedonist.

"Yes, I suppose the higher you go up the less work you do," said Mansell. "When I was there with old 'Bogus' I used to prepare my lessons sometimes, and, what's more, with a dictionary."

"Oh, *Quantum mutatus ab illo*," sighed Gordon.

"Yes, you know," said Betteridge, "the higher you get up the school the less you need worry about what you do. The prefect is supposed to be the model of what a Public School boy should be. And yet he is about the fastest fellow in the school. If I got caught in Davenham's study by the Chief, even if I said I was only borrowing a pencil, I should get in the deuce of a row. But Meredith can sit there all hall and say he's making inquiries about a boxing competition. He's trusted. The lower forms aren't allowed to prepare in their studies. They might use a crib, so they have to work in the day-room or big school. The Fifth is trusted to work, so it can spend school hours in its studies. Of course the Third works the whole time, while the Fifth just writes the translation between the lines and then plays barge cricket. It's no use trusting a Public School boy. Put faith in him and he'll take advantage of it; and yet there are still some who say the Public School system is satisfactory!"

"And I am one of them," said Mansell. "I've had a damned good term so far, and next term, when I get that big study, I shall have a still finer time. School may be bad as a moral training, but I live to enjoy myself. Here's to the Public School system. Long may it live!"

Betteridge smiled rather sadly; he was not an athlete.

The summer exams turned out a lamentably dull affair. Claremont superintended the Shell and the Lower Fifth. Anyone who wished to crib could have done so easily. But hardly anyone took the trouble. Mansell swore he would stay where he was. Ruddock, Johnstone and the other old stagers were all of the same opinion. Gordon

had determined to get high enough for a promotion, but no higher; tenth would do; and it was easy to get up there. The small boys in the front bench were all Balliol scholars in embryo; it would not pay them to crib. The great law of expediency overhung all proceedings. The result was that they were as lifeless and dull as most other virtuous things.

There were, however, a few bright incidents, the foremost of which was the Divinity exam. Claremont, we know, was a parson and a lover of poetry, and that term the form had been reading Judges and Samuel and Kings. As the Divinity exam. came first, it would be wise to put the old man in a good temper. Ruddock introduced Mr ffoakes Jackson's work on the Old Testament disguised as a writing-pad.

There is nothing easier than to write down correct answers to one-word questions, if only you have the answer-book in front of you. Ruddock's writing-pad passed slowly round the back and centre benches. Next day the result was announced.

"Well," said Claremont, "I must own that I was agreeably surprised by the results of the Divinity papers. The lowest mark was seventy-nine out of a hundred, and that was Kennedy." (Kennedy was invariably top in the week's order.) "Ruddock did a really remarkable paper, and scored a hundred out of a hundred. Johnstone and Caruthers both got ninety-nine, and several others were in the nineties. In fact, the only ones in the eighties were those who usually excel. I have taken the form now for over thirty years, and this is quite unparalleled. I shall ask the Headmaster if a special prize cannot be given to Johnstone. He certainly deserves one."

But the Chief was very wise. As he glanced down the mark list he realised that Johnstone's marks could hardly be due to honest work. But the Chief was also very tactful. He thought, on the whole, that in a case of such general merit it would be invidious to single any individual out for special distinction, and, of course, he could not give prizes to everyone. He would, however, most certainly

mention the fact at prize-giving. When he did, the applause was strangely mingled with laughter.

But this was only one incident in many dull hours. As a whole, the week's exam. failed to provide much to look back on afterwards with any satisfaction. Even the Chemistry exam. fell flat. FitzMorris picked up a copy of the paper on Jenks's desk and took a copy of it. The marks here also were above the average.

It is inevitable that the end of the summer term should be overhung with an atmosphere of sadness. When the new September term opens there are many faces that will be missing; the giants of yester-year will have departed; another generation will have taken its place. But for all that these last days are not without their own particular glory. Rome must have been very wonderful during the last week of Sulla's consulship. And in the passing of Meredith there was something essentially splendid; for it happens so seldom in life that the culminating point of our success coincides with the finish of anything. We are continually being mocked by the horror of the second best. We do not know where to stop; we cling too long to our laurels; and when the end finally comes they have begun to wither. Death is an anti-climax. The heart that once loved, and was as grass before the winds of passion, has grown cold amid a world of commonplace. But at school there is no dragging out of triumphs. All too soon the six short years fly past, and we stand on the threshold of life in the very flush of our pride. "Just once in a while we may finish in style." It is not often; the roses fade.

The final of the Senior House matches was drawing to a close on the last Friday of the term. Buller's were beating the School House L-Z easily. There had never been any doubt about the result. It was entirely a one-man side, and Meredith had managed to carry the side on his shoulders through the two first rounds.

The House had only two wickets in hand, and still wanted over eighty runs to avoid an innings' defeat. But Meredith was still in. It had been a great innings. He had

gone in first with Mansell, and watched wicket after wicket fall, while he had gone on playing the same brilliant game. Every stroke was the signal of a roar from the pavilion. The whole House was looking on. It was a fitting end to a dazzling career. It was like his life, reckless and magnificent. At last he mishit a half-volley and was caught in the deep for seventy-two.

As he left the wicket the whole House surged forward in front of the pavilion, and formed up in two lines, leaving a gangway. Amid tremendous applause Meredith ran between them. The cheering was deafening.

After prayers that night the Chief said a few words about the match.

"I am sorry we did not win; but, then, I don't think many of us dared to hope for that. At any rate, we were not disgraced, and I wish to take the opportunity of congratulating Meredith, not only on his superb innings this afternoon, but also on his keen and energetic captaincy throughout the term."

This was the signal for another demonstration. Everyone beat with their fists upon their table. It was a great scene.

The giants of our youth always appear to us much greater than those of any successive era. In future years Gordon was to see other captains of football, other captains of cricket, but with the exception of the tremendous Lovelace, Meredith towered above them all. He was at that moment the very great god of Gordon's soul. He seemed to be all that Gordon wished to be, brilliant and successful. Surely the fates had showered on him all their gifts.

On the last Monday there was a huge feed in the games study. Over twenty people were crowded in. Armour was there, Mansell, Gordon, Simonds, Foster, Ferguson, everyone except Clarke. There was no one who was not sorry to lose Meredith; his achievements so dazzled them that they could see nothing beyond them. They were proud to have such a man in the house. It was all sheer happiness.

Somehow on the last day the following notice appeared on the House board :—

In Memoriam

MALEVUS SCHOLARUM

In hadibus requiescat

Quod non sine ignominia militavit

No one knew who was responsible for it. Clarke looked at it for a second and turned away with a face that expressed no emotion.

By the Sixth Form green Simonds was shouting across to Meredith :

" Best of luck, old fellow, and mind you come down for the House supper. . . ."

On the way down to the station Archie Fletcher burst out :

" Well, thank God, that swine Clarke's gone. He absolutely mucked up the House." Gordon agreed.

" If we had a few more men like Meredith now ! " Rather a change had come over the boy who a year before had been shocked at the swearing in the bathroom. " When one is in Rome . . ."

BOOK II.—THE TANGLED SKEIN

"Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deça· delà
Pareil à la
Feuille morte."

PAUL VERLAINE.

CHAPTER I

QUANTUM MUTATUS

IF Gordon were given the opportunity of living any single year over again, exactly as he had lived it before, he would in all probability have chosen his second year at Fernhurst. He had then put safely out of sight behind him the doubts and anxieties of the junior; he had not yet reached any of the responsibilities of the senior. It was essentially a time of light-hearted laughter, of "rags," of careless happiness. Every day dawned without a trace of trouble imminent; every night closed with a feed in Mansell's big study, while the gramophone strummed out rag-time choruses. And yet these three terms were very critical ones in the development of Gordon's character. Sooner or later everyone must pass through the middle stage Keats speaks of, where "the way of life is uncertain, and the soul is in a ferment." Most boys have at their preparatory schools been so carefully looked after that they have never learnt to think for themselves. They take everything as a matter of course. They believe implicitly what their masters tell them about what is right and wrong. Life is divided up into so many rules. But when the boy reaches his Public School he finds himself in a world where actions are

regulated not by conscience, but by caprice. Boys do what they know is wrong; then invent a theory to prove it is right; and finally persuade themselves that black is white. It is pure chance what the Public School system will make of a boy. During the years of his apprenticeship, so to speak, he merely sits quiet, listening and learning; then comes the middle period, the period in which he is gradually changing into manhood. In it all his former experiences are jumbled hopelessly together, his life is in itself a paradox. He does things without thinking. There is no consistency in his action. Then finally the threads are unravelled, and out of the disorder of conflicting ideas and emotions the tapestry is woven on the wonderful loom of youth.

The average person comes through all right. He is selfish, easy-going, pleasure-loving, absolutely without a conscience, for the simple reason that he never thinks. But he is a jolly good companion; and the Freemasonry of a Public School is amazing. No man who has been through a good school can be an outsider. He may hang round the Empire bar, he may cheat at business; but you can be certain of one thing, he will never let you down. Very few Public School men ever do a mean thing to their friends. And for a system that produces such a spirit there is something to be said after all.

But for the boy with a personality school is very dangerous. Being powerful, he can do nothing by halves; his actions influence not only himself, but many others. On his surroundings during the time of transition from boyhood to manhood depend to a great extent the influence that man will work in the world. He will do whatever he does on a large scale, and people are bound to look at him. He may stand at the head of the procession of progress; he may dash himself to pieces fighting for a worthless cause, and by the splendour of his contest draw many to him. More likely he will be like Byron, a wonderful, irresponsible creature, who at one time plumbed the depths, and at another swept the heavens—a creature irresistibly attractive, because he is irresistibly human. Gordon was a

personality. His preparatory school master said of him once: "He will be a great failure or a great success, perhaps both," and it was the truest thing ever said of him. At present the future was very uncertain. During his first year he had been imbibing knowledge from his contemporaries; he had been a spectator; now the time had come for him to take his part in the drama of Fernhurst life. All ignorant he went his way; careless, arrogant and proud.

It must be owned that during this year Gordon was rather an objectionable person. He was very much above himself. For five years he had been tightly held in check, and when freedom at last came he did not quite know how to use it. He was boisterous and noisy; always in the middle of everything. If ever there was a row in the studies, it would be a sure assumption that Caruthers was mixed up in it. Everything combined to give him a slack time.

Ferguson was head of the House. But he took only a casual interest in its welfare.

"My dear Betteridge," he used to say, "if you were aware of the large issues of art and life, you would see that it would be a mere waste of time worrying about such a little thing as discipline in a house. You should widen your intellectual horizon. Read Verlaine and Baudelaire and then see life as it is."

Ferguson was a poet; twice a term the school magazine was enriched with a poem from his pen. His last effort had been magnificent; it was called *Languor*, and opened with the superb line:

"In amber dreams of amorous despair."

"The Bull" had asked someone in his house what the thing meant. To Ferguson that seemed a high compliment. To be incoherent was a great gift. Swinburne often meant very little, and in his heart of hearts Ferguson thought *Languor* was, on the whole, more melodious than *Dolores*. But that was, of course, purely a matter of

opinion. At any rate, it was a fine composition; and a poet must not dabble in the common intrigues of little minds.

He let the House go its own sweet way; and the House was grateful, and gave Ferguson the reputation of being rather a sport. There were no more weekly orders; no more cleaning of corps clothes. There was at last peace in Jerusalem, and plenteousness within her palaces.

Simonds was captain of the House. He was working hard for a History scholarship, and could not spend much time in looking after House games. There would be tons of time in the Easter term to train on House sides. So he, too, let things slide, and the House lived a happy life. Those who wanted to play footer, played; those who wanted to work, worked; those who wished to do nothing, did nothing. A cheerful philosophy. For a week it worked quite well.

Gordon was lucky enough to find himself in the position of not only not wanting to work, but also not having to. He had got his promotion into V. A, and found it a land of milk and honey. Macdonald, his form master, was one of the most splendid men Fernhurst has ever owned on its staff. For over forty years he had sat in exactly the same chair, and watched generation after generation pass, without appearing the least bit older. He grew a little stout, perhaps. But his heart was the same. It took a lot to trouble him. He realised that the world was too full of sceptics and cynics, and swore that he would not number himself among them. He was now the senior assistant master and was the best scholar on the staff.

"You know, these young men aren't what we were," he used to say to his form; "not one of them can write a decent copy of Latin verses. All these Cambridge men are useless—useless!" In his form it was unnecessary to work very hard; but in it the average boy learnt more than he learnt anywhere else. For Macdonald was essentially a scholar; he did not merely mug up notes by German commentators an hour before the lesson. For him the classics lived; and he made his form realise this.

To do Aristophanes with him was far better than any music hall. Horace he hated. One day when they were doing *Donec gratus eram tibi*, he burst out with wrath :

" Horrible little cad he was ! Can't you see him ? Small man, blue nose with too much drinking. Bibulous little beast. If I had been Lydia I would have smacked his face and told him to go to Chloë. I'd have had done with him. Beastly little cad ! "

But it was in history that he was at his best. It was a noble sight to see him imitate the weak-kneed, slobbering James I. ; and he had the private scandals of Henry VIII. at his finger-tips. For all commentators he had a profound contempt. One day he seized Farrar's edition of *St Luke*, and holding it at arm's-length between his finger and thumb, shook it before the form.

" Filth," he cried, " filth and garbage ; take it away and put it down the water-closet." He had a genius for spontaneous comments. Kennedy was very nervous ; and whenever he said his rep. he used to hold the seat of his trousers.

" Man, man ! " Macdonald shouted out, " you won't be able to draw any inspiration from your stern."

His form would be in a continuous roar of laughter all day long ; and when particularly pleased it always rubbed its feet on the floor, a strange custom that had lasted many years. Claremont's form-room was situated just above him, and he could often hardly hear himself speak. He used to complain bitterly.

" How I wish my jovial colleague down below would keep his form a little more in order."

But Macdonald got his revenge one day when Claremont was reciting Macbeth's final speech fortissimo to his form.

" Hush ! " said Macdonald. " We must listen to this." Suddenly he chuckled to himself : " And do you think he really imagines he is doing any good to his form by giving that nigger minstrel entertainment up there ? "

The roar of laughter that followed quite spoilt the effect of the recitation. Work became quite impossible in V. B.

It was about this time that the House began to interest

itself in the welfare of Rudd. Rudd was the senior scholar of the year before, and he looked like it. He was fairly tall and very thin. His legs bore little relation to the rest of his body. They fell into place. He was of a dusky countenance, partly because he was of Byzantine origin, partly because he never shaved, chiefly because he did not wash. His clothes always looked as if they had been rolled up into a bundle and used for dormitory football. Perhaps they had. Rudd was not really a bad fellow. He was by way of being a wit. One day the Chief had set the form a three-hour Divinity paper, consisting of four longish questions. One was: "Do you consider that the teaching of Socrates was in some respects more truly Christian than that of St Paul?" Rudd showed up a whole sheet with one word on it: "Yes." Next day his Sixth Form privileges were taken away. But the House took little notice of his academic audacities. Rudd did not wash; he was an insanitary nuisance; moreover, he did not play footer.

"That man Rudd is a disgrace to the House," Archie announced one evening after tea; "he's useless to the House; he slacks at rugger and is unclean. Let's ship his study." There was a buzz of assent. There was a good deal of rowdyism going on in the House just then; and at times it would have been hard to draw the exact border-line between ragging and bullying. A solemn procession moved to Study No. 14. Rudd was working.

"Hullo, Byzantium," said Mansell. "How goes it?"

"Oh, get out, you; I want to work!"

"Gentlemen, Mr Rudd wishes to work," Betteridge announced. "The question is, shall he be allowed to? I say 'No!'" He suddenly jerked away the chair Rudd was sitting on: the owner of the study collapsed on the floor.

Archie at once loosed a tremendous kick at his back.

"Get up, you dirty swine! Haven't you any manners? Stand up when you are talking to gentlemen."

Rudd had a short temper; he let out and caught Mansell on the chin. It is no fun ragging a man who doesn't lose his temper. But, as far as Mansell was concerned, pro-

ceedings were less cordial after this. He leapt on Rudd, bore him to the ground, and sat on his head. Foul language was audible from the bottom of the floor. Rudd had not studied Euripides for nothing. Lovelace picked up a hockey stick. "This, gentlemen," he began, "is a hockey stick, useful as an implement of offence if the prisoner gets above himself, and also useful as a means of destroying worthless property. I ask you, gentlemen, is it right that, while we should have only three chairs among two people, Rudd should have two all to himself? Gentlemen, I propose to destroy that chair."

In a few minutes the chair was in fragments. A crowd began to collect.

"I say, you men," shouted Gordon, "the refuse heap is just opposite; let's transfer all the waste paper of the last ten years and bury the offender."

Just across the passage was a long, blind-alley effect running under the stairs, which was used as a store for waste paper. It was cleaned out about once every generation. In a few minutes waste-paper baskets had been "bagged" from adjoining studies, and No. 14 was about a foot deep in paper.

"That table is taking up too much room, Lovelace," Bradford bawled out; "smash it up."

The table went to join the chair in the Elysian Fields. Rudd was now almost entirely immersed in paper. The noise was becoming excessive. Oaths floated down the passage.

At last Ferguson moved. In a blasé way he strolled down the passage. For a minute he was an amused spectator, then he said languidly: "Suppose we consider the meeting adjourned. I think it's nearly half-time." Gradually the crowd began to clear; Rudd rose out of the paper like Venus out of the water. A roar of laughter broke out.

"Well, Rudd, I sincerely hope you are insured," murmured Ferguson.

What Rudd said is unprintable. In his bill at the end of the term his father found there was a charge of ten shillings for damaged property in Study No. 14. Rudd got less pocket-money the next term.

" I say, you fellows, have you heard the latest ? ' The Bull ' has kicked me out of the Colts."

Lovelace came into the changing-room, fuming with rage. There had been a Colts' trial that afternoon. Buller had cursed furiously and finally booted Lovelace off the field, with some murmured remarks about " typical School House slackness."

" It's damned rot," said Bradford. " Because Simonds has made rather an ass of himself in the last two matches, Bull thinks the whole House is slack. He gave Turner six to-day just because he hadn't looked up one word. I hope he does not intend to judge the whole House by Simonds."

The House was getting fed up with Simonds. It's all very well working in moderation for scholarships, but when it came to allowing games to suffer through it, it was getting serious. Private inclination cannot stand in the way of the real business of life. And no one would hesitate to own that he had come to Fernhurst merely to play footer.

" But, you know, I don't think ' the Bull's ' that sort," Gordon protested; " he may lose his temper and all that, but I think he's fair."

" Do you ? " said Hunter drily.

There was a laugh. As a whole, the House was certain that " the Bull " was against them.

In a week's time Lovelace was back again in the Colts, and Gordon was telling his friends what fools they were not to trust " the Bull."

Gordon was confirmed this term. He was rather young ; but it was obviously the thing to do, and, as Mansell said : " It's best to take the oath when you are more or less ' pi,' and there is still some chance of remaining so. For you can't tell what you will be like in a year or so."

As is the case with most boys, Confirmation had very little effect on Gordon. He was not an atheist ; he accepted Christianity in much the same way as he accepted the Conservative party. All the best people believed in it, so it was bound to be all right ; but at the same time it had not the slightest influence over his actions. If he had any

religion at this time it was House football; but for the most part, he lived merely to enjoy himself, and his pleasures were, on the whole, quite innocuous. They very rarely went much beyond ragging Rudd.

"Do you think," said Gordon, the evening after his first confirmation address, "that the masters really believe confirmation has any effect on us? Because you know it doesn't."

"I don't think it matters very much," said Hunter, "what masters think; most of them here have got into a groove. They believe the things they ought to believe; they are all copies of the same type. They've clean forgotten what it was like at school. Hardly any of them really know boys. They go on happily believing them 'perhaps a little excitable, but on the whole, perfectly straight and honest.' Then a row comes. They are horrified. They don't realise all of us are the same. They've made themselves believe what they want to believe."

"Yes, and when they are told the truth, they won't believe it," said Betteridge. "You know, I was reading an article in some paper the other day, by an assistant master at Winchborough, called Ferrers. He was fair cursing the whole system. Well, I showed that to Claremont, just for a rag; told him I thought it was rather good. The old fool looked at it for some time, and then said: 'Well, Betteridge, don't form your style on this. It is very perfervid stuff. Not always grammatical.' All the ass thinks of is whether plurals agree with singulars; he does not care a damn whether the material is good."

"That's it," said Gordon. "Masters try to make you imitate, and not think for yourself. 'Mould your Latin verses on Vergil, your Greek prose on Thucydides, your English on Matthew Arnold, but don't think for yourself. Don't be original.' If anyone big began to think he'd see what a farce it all is; and then where would all these fossils be? It's all sham; you read men's reports. Bradford gets told he's a good moral influence. Mansell works hard and deserves his prize. It is hoped that confirmation will be a help to me. Rot, it all is!"

"Oh, I'm not so certain confirmation is a farce," broke in Bradford. "If you don't believe in it, you won't get to heaven."

"But who the hell wants to get there," said Mansell. "Sing hymns all day long. I can imagine it. Fancy having Caruthers singing out of tune in your ear for ever. It's bad enough in chapel once a day. But for ever——!"

"My good lads, you don't know what heaven's like," whispered Bradford confidentially. "Claremont was gassing away about Browning the other day, and said that he believed that in heaven you could do all the things you wanted to do on earth! And by Jove I would have a hot time—some place, heaven!"

"By Jove, yes; but you know, Bradford, there won't be much left for you to do in heaven; at the rate you are going you will have done most things on earth."

"Oh, I am going to reform, and then I shall write to Claremont and tell him how I, a wandering sheep, was brought home by his interpretation of Andrew Dol Portio—I think that's what the thing was called."

"Of course, that is an idea," said Mansell, "but I am not so sure of what's going to happen when we're dead. I am going to have a jolly good time, and then take the risk. I never hedge my bets."

"Well, you may go on your way to the eternal bonfire," said Bradford, "but I am for righteousness. Now, listen to this, it's in the book we have to read for confirmagers, *Daily Lies on the Daily Path*: '. . . If you think that in your house things are being talked about that would shock your mother or sister, don't merely shun it as something vile. It is your duty to fight against it; reason with the boys. They probably have some grain of decency left in them. If that fails, report the matter to your house master. He will take your side. The boys will probably be expelled, but you will have done your duty, as Solomon says in Proverbs. . . .' There now, Mansell. I am one of the children of light. So you know what to expect from me. Shall I reason with you, lad? Have you a grain of decency left in you, or must I——"

At this point a well-aimed cushion put an end to the fervour of the new child of light. Betteridge sat on his head.

"Look here, Bradford," he began, "you may be a convert and all that, but don't play John the Baptist in here. It does not pay. Very shortly I shall carry your head to the dustbin in a saucer. Let me tell you the story of one Stevenson in Mr Macdonald's house. He was, like you, about to be confirmed, and was, like you, very full of himself. And being, as Lovelace, a lover of the race-course, he walked about in his study in hall, chanting us a dirge out of sheer religious fervour: 'My name is down for the confirmation stakes.' Macdonald passed the door and, on hearing him, entered and said: 'Well you are scratched now at any rate!' Take that to heart, and be not as the seeds that are sown on stony ground, who spring up in the night and wither in the morning."

Betteridge intoned the whole lecture. The story was in a way true, but the Stevenson in question had shouted down the passage: "Hurrah, no prep. to-night; my name is down for the confirmation stakes." With the result as above. Gordon burst out:

"By the way, talking of Macdonald, he made a priceless remark to-day. Kennedy, that little cove in Christy's, came in late and began stammering out that it was only a minute or two over time; Macdonald looked on him for a minute, and then said: 'Your excuse is just about as good as the woman who, having had an illegitimate baby, protested that it was only a small one.'"

"By Jove, he's some fellow. Now he's a man," said Mansell. "He's a boy still; he can see our side of the question, and he knows what footling idiots half of the common room are. If we had more like him." . . .

"And it would be a jolly good thing, too," said Betteridge, "if we could get a really young master like that Winchborough man, Ferrers, I was telling you about. He'd stir things up a bit."

At that moment the Abbey sounded half-past eight.

"Good Lord," said Hunter, "only quarter of an hour more, and we've done nothing the whole of hall. Let's rout out Lovelace and go and rag Rudd."

In three minutes Rudd was under the table, with Mansell seated on his chest.

It was rather unfortunate that Gordon should have chosen Tester to have a study with. Tester was over sixteen, was in the Lower Sixth, and had got his Seconds at cricket. He was a House blood. Gordon did not care for him particularly. But he had a good study, No. 1, at the far end of the lower landing, and Gordon wanted a big study. It was so very fine to sit chatting to Foster or Collins in one of the small studies for a little time and then to say suddenly, in a lordly manner: "Oh, look here, there's no room here at all. Come down to my study, there are several arm-chairs there!"

It is always pleasant to appear better than one's equals. But Tester was a dangerous friend to have at a time when the mind is so open to impressions. For Tester had not risen to his position on his own merits alone. Lovelace major had always said he was not much good, and the year before had not given him his House cap. But Tester was a very great friend of Stewart's, the captain of the Eleven. Stewart gave him his Seconds for making twenty against the town, so Meredith had to give him his House cap. It is a school rule that a "Seconds" must have his House cap. And Tester was not improved by his friendship with Stewart, and the pity was that he was really clever. He could always argue his case.

"I never asked to be brought into this world," he said, "I am just suddenly put here, and told to make the best of things; and I intend to make the best of things. I am going to do what I like with my life. Wrong and right are merely relative terms. They change to fit their environment. Baudelaire would not have been tolerated in the Hampstead Garden Suburb; Catullus would not have been received in Sparta. But at Paris and Rome customs were different. We only frame philosophies to suit our

wishes. And I prefer to follow my own inclinations to those of a sham twentieth-century civilisation."

Gordon did not like this; but if one lives daily in the company of a man who is clever and a personality, one is bound to look at life, at times, at any rate, through his spectacles. Gordon began to look on things which he once objected to as quite natural and ordinary.

"I say, Caruthers, I hope you don't mind, clearing out of here for a bit," Tester would say. "Stapleton is just coming up here for a few minutes. You quite understand, don't you?"

As soon as we begin to look on a thing as ordinary and natural, we also begin to think it is right. After a little Gordon ceased to worry whether such things were right or wrong. It was silly to quarrel with existing conditions, especially if they were rather pleasant ones. Gordon had a study with Tester till the end of the summer.

One day, towards the end of the Easter term, Gordon asked Tester, rather shyly, if he would leave him alone a little. "I've often cleared out for you, you know."

"Of course, that's quite all right, my dear fellow. Any time you like, I understand!" Tester smiled as he walked down the passage.

But during the winter term Gordon worried about little except football; when he was not playing, he was ragging. Form he looked on as a glorious recreation. He was learning more than he ever learned afterwards without making much effort. Macdonald was a scholar; he did not teach people by making them work, he taught them by making it impossible for them to forget what he told them. No one who has ever been through the Upper Fifth at Fernhurst would have the slightest difficulty in writing a character sketch of any English king, even though he might never have read a chapter about him. Macdonald made every man in history a living character; not a sort of rack on which to hang dates and facts.

Football, however, was not going quite so satisfactorily. Gordon was never tried for the Colts Fifteen, although he subsequently proved himself better than most of the other

forwards in it, and had to play in House games every day. Once a week a House game is a thundering good game, but more often it is very one-sided, and for a person who really cares for footer, such afternoons are very dull. On the Upper or Lower a good game was certain ; the captain of the school always chose sides that would be fairly level. But House sides were very different. Nothing depended on their results. Sometimes bloods would play, sometimes not ; it was merely a toss up. And worst of all, Simonds was abominably slack. For a few weeks the House thought it rather funny, and the smaller members of the House secretly rejoiced ; but the games-loving set waxed furious.

" Damn it all," said Mansell, " the man's here to coach us, not to sit in his study swating up dates ! "

The result of it was that Mansell and his friends got filled with an enormous sense of their own importance ; they considered themselves the only people in the House who were keen. And they let the rest of the House know it. They groused about " the great days of Lovelace," and gave people like Rudd a most godless time. There is no more thoroughly self-satisfied person than the second-class athlete ; and when he also imagines himself an Isaiah preaching repentance, he wants kicking badly. Unfortunately no one kicked Gordon or Lovelace ; and they went on their way contented with themselves, though with no one else.

One of the easiest ways of discovering a person's social status at school is by watching his behaviour in the tuck-shop. The tuck-shop or " Toe," as it is generally called, is a long wooden building with corrugated iron roof, situated just opposite Buller's house, not far from the new buildings. It was only erected in 1908, and it is to be hoped that it is only temporary, for it is amazingly ugly. It is divided by a wooden partition into two shops ; at each end of the outer shop run two counters. On the right-hand counter, which is connected with a small kitchen, cakes, muffins and sausages are sold ; on the left-hand side there are sweets and fruit. The inner and larger room is filled with tables, and round the room are photographs of all the school teams.

At the far end, in huge green frames, are hung photographs of the two great Fernhurst Fifteens who went through the season without losing a match. The " Toe " is the noisiest place in the whole school. It is superintended by five waitresses, and they have a very poor time of it.

The real blood is easily recognised. He strolls in as if he had taken a mortgage on the place, swaggers into the inner room, puts down his books on the top table in the right-hand corner—only the bloods sit here—and demands a cup of tea and a macaroon. A special counter has been made by the bloods' table, so that the great men can order what they want without going back into the outer shop. No real blood ever makes a noise in the outer shop. When he is once inside the inner shop, however, he immediately lets everyone know it. If he sees anyone he knows, he bawls out :

" I say, have you prepared this stuff for Christy ? "

The person asked never has.

" Nor have I. Rot, I call it."

No blood is ever known to have prepared anything.

The big man then sits down. If a friend of his is anywhere about, he flings a lump of sugar at him. When he gets up he knocks over at least one chair. He then strolls out, observing the same magnificent dignity in the outer shop. No one can mistake him.

But the only other person who makes no row in the outer shop is the small boy. He creeps in, and creeps out, quite unnoticed. Everyone with any claim to greatness asserts his presence loudly. The chief figures at this time were the junior members of Buller's, and especially the two Hazlitts. Their elder brother was the school winger, and an important person ; but they had done nothing but make a noise during their two years at Fernhurst. Athleticism had had a disastrous effect on them. Because their house had won the Thirds, Two Cock and Three Cock, they thought themselves gods. In the tuck-shop they acted as avenging angels sent to punish a wicked world. Their chief amusement was to see a person leaning over a counter, kick his backside when he was not looking, and then run

away. It was their class that were the real nuisance in the "Toe." They persecuted the girls in charge most damnably. Very often only one girl was in charge. The younger Hazlitt would at once seat himself on the other counter and shriek out:

"Nellie, when are you coming over here? I shall bag these sweets if you don't buck up." He would then seize a huge glass jar of peppermints, and roll it along the zinc counter.

"Oh, Mr Hazlitt, do leave that alone," the wretched Nellie would implore. But it was no use. When there was a big crowd waiting to be served, the Hazlitt brethren would take knives and beat on the zinc counter, shouting out: "Nellie, come here!" They were a thoroughly objectionable pair. Whenever Mansell saw them, he kicked them hard, and they got rather frightened of the School House after a bit.

It is not to be thought, however, that the behaviour of the School House was exemplary. Mansell usually kicked up an almighty row, but he left "Nellie" alone. He was not going to lower himself to the Hazlitt level.

It is an amazing thing that the half-blood very rarely gets into a row; and yet he always talks as if expulsion hung over his head. Probably he thinks it draws attention to himself. Mansell would always enter the shop in exactly the same way; he banged his books on the counter and, sighting Hunter, fired off at once.

"I say, look here, give me a con. I am in the hell of a hole. I prepared the wrong stuff for old Claremont, and the man's getting awfully sick with me; he may report me to the Chief. Do help me out!"

"Sorry, old cock," said Hunter, "but I specialise in stinks!"

"Oh, do you? Well, I suppose I shall have to chance it; that's all. He may not shove me on."

The small boys thought Mansell's daring very fine. But strangely enough, although he was always in a state of fearful agitation, he had so far singularly managed to avoid getting reported. But still it kept up appearances to talk a lot.

Gordon, of course, had to be fairly quiet in the tuck-shop. He was not yet known among the school in general ; and it was only in Buller's that small boys gave tongue in the tuck-shop. But then Buller's were, in their own opinion, to the rest of the school as Rome was to Italy. Fernhurst was merely a province of Buller's. They kept this view to themselves, however. "The Bull" would have dealt very summarily with such assumptions.

And so, when Lovelace and Tester and Mansell were there Gordon was generally to be found contributing his share to the general disorder, but when alone, he sat quite quietly with Collins and Foster. He rather longed for the day when he could start a row all on his own. A strange ambition for any candidate for immortality !

About the middle of the term was the field day at Salisbury Plain. Most of the Public Schools were present ; it was a noble affair from the general's point of view. The school, however, considered it a putrid sweat. For hours they pounded over ploughed fields ; and, like most field days, the day dragged slowly on to its weary close. At last two hundred very tired privates fell into the six-fifty to Fernhurst. The army class got off early school next morning.

Two days later a notice was brought round by the school *custos* : "Roll for all those who went to Salisbury Plain on Wednesday in the big schoolroom at six P.M." There is nothing quite so enjoyable as the sensation that a big row is on, in which you yourself have no part. Gordon trembled with excitement. He whispered excitedly to the man on his left, Lidderdale, a man in Rogers' : "What's up ? "

"Oh, nothing much. Some silly ass put his bayonet through a carriage window. Rogers was gassing about it in the dormitories last night."

"Oh ! " said Gordon. Very disappointedly he returned to his academic activities. He had had hopes of some splendid row, and after all, it was only about a silly ass and a bayonet. Rotten ! Fancy being made late for tea because of that. But, as it turned out, his hopes were satisfied. When he reached the big schoolroom, every-

thing certainly looked most formal. In front of the big dais where the choir stood during the concerts sat all the masters in a half-circle. The Chief sat in the centre.

"Are they all here, Udal?" the Chief asked the senior sergeant.

"Yes, sir."

The Chief rose.

"I have to address you to-night on a very serious subject. During the field day last Wednesday, someone in this room disgraced not only his school, but the King's uniform. An officer from another school has written to tell me that he overheard two of you talking outside the canteen in language that would disgrace a costermonger. I sincerely wish he had taken their names at once. As it is, I do not know their names. The officer in question said that both boys were over seventeen, and that the shorter of the two said nothing at all, as far as he could hear. Now I want the names of both those boys. If they own up to me to-night, I shall most certainly deal very severely with one at least of them. If they do not come to me of their own free will, I may be forced to ask the officer to come down and identify the boys, in which case both will from that instant cease to be members of Fernhurst School."

In a state of high excitement the school poured down to tea.

"I bet it's someone in Christy's," said Bradford.

Christy believed in leaving his house entirely to his prefects. It was a good way of avoiding responsibility; but his choice of prefects was not altogether wise.

"Do you think the men will own up?" said Gordon.

"Not unless they're most abandoned fools," replied Lovelace.

There was only one topic of conversation at tea, and afterwards Lovelace, Hobson and Gordon discussed the affair keenly in No. 1. They all agreed that the men would not own up, and the general opinion was that someone in Christy's was responsible. Discussion raged fiercely as to who it was. Gordon was all for it being Isaacs,

Lovelace for Everington, Hunter for Mead. The point was being debated, when Tester and Bradford came in.

"Hullo, come in," shouted Gordon, "we are having a great fight about this. I say Isaacs is the most likely man. What do you think?"

Tester looked round carefully, and then began anxiously:

"Look here, you men; swear you won't tell a soul if we tell you something."

The oath was taken.

"Well, it's us!"

There was a hush. "Good Gawd!" said Hunter. Silence ensued; but curiosity soon overcame surprise.

"What did you say, by the by?" asked Gordon.

Tester repeated as far as he could remember the exact words.

"Yes, you know; it was a bit hot, wasn't it? I expect you opened the blighter's eyes a bit. He wasn't used to that sort of literature."

In spite of themselves Tester and Bradford laughed. They had been vaguely aware of a tired-looking figure in a Sam Browne as they left the canteen. He had looked "some ass." But Gordon soon became serious again.

"What are you men going to do? Of course you won't own up."

"No; well, we can't very well. I am in the Sixth and Bradford's had one row this term, and of course, I was the criminal. I am supposed to be a responsible personage."

"Oh, of course," said Gordon. "I know owning up is quite out of the question."

"But do you think anything will happen?" Bradford was a little frightened. "I mean will there be a sort of general inspection?"

"Oh, my good man, there'll be nothing of the sort. When a master begs men to own up, it means that he's up the spout. It's much more fun catching a fellow red-handed. And, after all, you two are the last people anyone would think of."

"Of course, it's all right," said Lovelace; "there's only one thing to do. You talk of nothing else but this rotten

affair ; talk about it in the Toe, in the changing-room, in form, in chapel, if you like. Ask people you meet if they've owned up. Treat the whole thing as a glorious rag."

"Yes," shouted Gordon, "let's go down to Rudd and tell him if he doesn't own up we'll give him hell."

And in truth the next half-hour was for Rudd very hell of very hell. His existence just now was not very pleasant. If he had been good at footer all his domestic failings would have been forgiven him. But he was not ; he loathed the game, though at times he would have given anything to be of some use. Strangely enough, at Oxford he found people respected his brains, and no one hated him because he could not drop goals from the twenty-five. Life is full of compensations.

Lovelace and Tester were both supreme actors. That night in the dormitory they were full of the subject. After lights out, they kept the whole place in a roar of laughter. Bradford joined in a bit, but he was still nervous ; visions rose up before him of an officer passing down the ranks, suddenly seizing him, and saying : "This is the man." It was hardly a ravishing thought ; but it was useless to go back on a lie. Tester realised this. As Ferguson came, he called out :

"I say, Ferguson, you know you'd better go up to the Chief and tell him you did it."

Ferguson was, like the Boy Scout, always prepared.

"My good man, you don't surely imagine I am so devoid of good feeling and have such a hazy conception of the higher life as not to inform the Headmaster. I have just returned from breaking the news to him. He took it quite well on the whole. It was a touching scene. I nearly wept."

Betteridge then arose, and gave an imitation of Rogers' sermon.

"Well, Ferguson, I must own that I am sorry to lose you. I would give much to retain you here. But *dis aliter visum* : you must go. You are expelled. Between the Scylla of over-elation and the Charybdis of despair you have a long time steered the bark of the School House. But

one failing wipes away many virtues. And we must not discriminate between the doer and the deed, the actor and the action, the sinner and the sin. The same punishment for all. But in that paradisal state where suns sink not nor flowers fade, there will be a sweet reunion."

It was pure Rogers. The dormitory rocked with laughter. Tester began to give his impressions of what the officer must have looked like. There was a heated argument as to whether he was a parson. Mansell thought not.

"A fellow who knows his Bible well would not be shocked with a little swearing. I bet some of the bits in Genesis and Samuel are hotter than anything the blighter said. It was probably some dotard who reads Keats."

This seemed a sound piece of reasoning.

Next day the rumour spread round the school that a half-holiday was going to be stopped, as no one had owned up.

"Safety," said Tester. "That means the chase is given up."

But the school, which, up to now, had treated the affair as a joke, began to get annoyed. Tolerance and broad-mindedness were all right as long as their own interests were secure; but when it came to a half-holiday being stopped because some blighter had not the decency to own up——

"It's a scandal," said Fletcher, in front of the House studies. "First this blighter does the school a lot of harm by swearing; and then he is in too much of a funk to own up, and we get in a row for it. Man must be a colossal swine."

He forgot that last night he had been treating the whole thing as a joke. Rogers was passing by up the Head-master's drive on the way to his class-room, and overheard this outburst of righteous indignation. His heart was at once rejoiced to see such a good moral tone in the school. As he said in the common room: "It makes one proud to see what a sane, unprejudiced view the school takes of this regrettable incident."

Lovelace now hit on a great plan. "Let's organise a

strike," he said. "Why should we go into school to-morrow? If we can get enough to cut, we can't be punished. Let's canvass."

The fiery cross of rebellion was flung down the study passages. With lists of paper in their hands, Hunter, Mansell, Lovelace and Gordon (Tester thought himself too big a blood for such a proceeding) dashed into study after study urging their habitants to sign on for the great strike.

"Come on, you men," Hunter said. "It is the idea of a lifetime. If enough don't turn up, nothing can happen. You can't sack the whole school."

A few bright rebels like Archie Fletcher signed on at once. Rudd, too, thought it safer to put his name down. But the average person was more cautious.

"How many have you got down?"

"Oh, about fifteen."

"Well, look here, if you get over fifty I'll join in."

As nearly everyone said this, the hopes of successful operations seemed unlikely.

But still it all helped to disarm any trace of suspicion.

"I say, Ferguson, what do you think of all this?" said Mansell.

"I think a great creed has gone down. I shall no longer believe that conscience and cowardice are synonymous; only conscience is the trade name of the firm."

Mansell laughed. It was probably meant to be funny. He never quite understood Ferguson. On the next afternoon everyone sat down to two hours' extra school. There was much swearing at tea. But in a day or two it was all forgotten.

To this day no one at Fernhurst knows who the two boys were. The secret was well kept.

As the term drew to its close, with the Fifteen filled up and all the big matches over, interest was centred mainly in House football and House affairs. Mansell, it is true, was still worrying whether he would get his Seconds. But Lovelace and Gordon talked of nothing but the Thirds. The Colts' matches were over, and on House games one of

the two House sides was always a trial Thirds. Edwards, a heavy, clumsy scrum-half, was captain of the side; Gordon led the scrum.

"If only we had Armour back as House captain," Hunter used to complain, "that side couldn't lose."

"And we sha'n't lose either," said Gordon; "we are going to sweep the field next term, and we are going to drive the ball over the line somehow, and God save anyone who gets in the light."

No House side ever imagines it is going to be beaten. Three Cocks have been lost by over fifty points; yet on the morning of the match half the "grovel" would be quite ready to lay heavy odds on their chance of winning, and whenever there is a good chance of victory, the House is absolutely cocksure. The result of this is that the House is magnificent in an uphill fight, but is rather liable to fling away a victory by carelessness.

But this side was certainly "pretty hot stuff." It took a lot to stop Stewart when once he got the ball, and Lovelace was brilliant in attack. The grovel was light, and was a little inclined to wing, but in the loose it was a big scoring combination. In the last week of the term there was a House game on, the Lower *v.* Buller's. Simonds turned out the Thirds side. It was a terrific fight. Buller's had two Seconds playing and a House cap; but the House had had the advantage of having played together. There was, at this time, a good deal of bad blood between the House and Buller's, and the play was not always quite clean. There was a good deal of fisting in the scrum. Gordon was in great form; he scored the first try with a long dribble, and led the pack well. Lovelace dropped a goal from a mark nearly midway between the twenty-five and the half-way line. Collins scrambled over the corner from a line out. Buller's only scored once, when Aspinall, their wing three, who had his Seconds, got a decent pass, and ran practically the whole length of the field. Towards the end, however, the light House grovel got tired and was penned in its own half. "Come on, House," Gordon yelled. "One more rush; let the swine have it!" The House was

exhausted, it managed to keep Buller's out; but no more. This was an ominous sign. It had not been a long game.

"The Bull" had been watching the game. As the players trooped off the field, he called back Gordon. "Caruthers, here a second. You know, I don't want to interfere where it's not my business, but you know I don't think you should call another house 'swine.' To begin with, it's not the English idea of sport, and I think if there's any ill feeling between two houses in a school, especially the two biggest, I don't think it's good for the school. Do you see what I mean?"

"Oh yes, sir. I didn't mean——"

"Of course you didn't, my dear chap. . . . By the way, will you be young enough for the Colts' next year? You will. Good. Then it won't be at all a bad side. Collins and Foster were quite good; and you played a really good game."

"What did 'the Bull' want, Caruthers?" Lovelace asked, as Gordon walked into the changing-room.

"Oh, nothing much. He didn't like me calling his fellows 'swine.'"

"But why the devil not? They are swine, aren't they?"

"Of course they are; but you can hardly expect 'the Bull' to realise it."

"No, perhaps not; but, my God, they are the last thing in swine, those Hazlitts and their crowd."

The House supper this year was not much, compared with the one of the year before. Simonds was not an R. D. Lovelace, and Ferguson again spoke miles above his audience. However, he was a sport, and let them do as they liked; so they drank his health and sang: *He's a Jolly Good Fellow!* Several old boys came down, FitzMorris with an eyeglass and a wonderful tie; Sandham, as usual, quite insignificant; Armour wearing the blue waistcoat of a Wadham drinking club. Meredith had been expected, but at the last moment he had found his debts so much in excess of a very generous allowance that he would have to retrench a little. It was a pity; but in the Bullingdon living is not cheap and Meredith was a great blood.

The prize-giving this term afforded little comfort to Gordon; he was easily bottom of V. A. Rather a collapse, but still one has to keep up with things. It does not do to lose sight of the really important issues of life, and Gordon had certainly been a social success. He travelled up to London with Ferguson and Tester, and felt no small part of a giant when Collins entered their carriage, suddenly saw Ferguson, and with inaudible apologies vanished quickly down the corridor. Olympus was not so very far off.

CHAPTER II

HEALTHY PHILISTINISM

During the Christmas holidays there appeared in a certain periodical one of the usual attacks on the Public School system. It repeated all the old arguments about keeping abreast of the times, and doing more modern languages and less classics. The writer had nothing new to say, and, like most other such attacks, his jeremiad was in an hour or two quite forgotten. But at Fernhurst it did have some effect, for it gave Henry Trundle the idea of forming a special class for French enthusiasts. Henry Trundle was one of the French masters. He was entirely English, had won his Blue for golf at Oxford, and had got a Double First. He also was quite incapable of teaching anything. His form made no pretence of keeping order; the noise that proceeded from his class-room could be heard anywhere within a radius of a hundred yards. And yet he was not a bad fellow; he was a good husband, and his children were very fond of him. His domestic virtues, however, were sadly lost on Fernhurst, who looked on him as a general buffoon, a hopeless ass. His class-room was considered a sort of Y.M.C.A. entertainment hall, where there was singing and dancing, and a mild check on excessive rioting.

At the beginning of the new term the Chief announced that in the upper school one hour every day would be devoted to the study of either French, maths or Latin. Each boy would choose his subject. Mr Reddon would superintend the maths, Mr Trundle the French; for Latin each boy would go to his own form master. To the hard-working, who had prizes before their eyes, this scheme presented few attractions; as scholars it would not be to their advantage to miss any classical hours, and French was

so useless in scholarships. Macdonald, when he took down the names of those who were to do Latin, found all those in front staying with him, and all those behind going elsewhere. Macdonald laughed up his sleeve.

"I suppose, Caruthers, you think you are going to get a jolly good time rushing about making odours in the laboratory, and reciting French verbs. Well, I hope you'll enjoy yourselves, that's all." Then he added, as an afterthought: "If I know Mr Trundle, you most certainly will."

His prophecy was correct. Mr Reddon's maths was, for the most part, composed of orderly and more or less sincere mathematicians; but Trundle's class-room was filled with the most arrant collection of frauds that have ever sat together this side of the Inferno. It was largely a School House gathering. Lovelace was there; Hunter, Mansell, Gordon, Archie and Collins. Christy's house supplied Dyke, a fine footballer and a splendid ragger; Claremont's sent two typical doormice in Forbes and Scobie; Buller's provided no one. Briault hailed from Rogers. It was his boast that he could imitate any kind of animal from a dog to a hyena. Benson, the only member of Abercombie's, was entirely insignificant, and actually did some work for the first two lessons. But it was impossible to work long in such surroundings; and tales of the extra French set are still told in whispers, after lights out, in the upper dormitories.

The opening was sensational. No sooner had Trundle taken his seat than Dyke leapt to his feet, jumped on the desk, jumped off it into the vast paper basket, upset that, charged up to Trundle, shook him by the hand, and began to pour out words: "My dear sir, how are you? How is Mrs Trundle, and the little Trundles? Have you had a pleasant Christmas? I have, sir. This, sir, is your extra French set. The French set—Mr Trundle; Mr Trundle—the French set." Amid a beating of desks Dyke returned to his seat. Trundle was used to this. But he had rather hoped his new set would be composed for the most part of honest young scholars. It was a disappointment; still, he had grown used to it. Life had not been too kind to him.

"Now, let me see," he began, "who's the senior man here?"

Immediately everyone except Benson stood up. "I am, sir."

"But you can't all be the senior."

"Yes, sir; we are," was the unanimous answer.

"You see, sir," Gordon explained, "I am the cleverest and should be the senior, but Mansell there, that dolt with the tie-pin, has been longer in the school, and he's got his Seconds, and rather fancies himself. Dyke has taken longer to reach IV. A than anyone else in the school's history, and thinks that a sufficient claim to be senior. Lovelace, oh, well, he's—well, I don't know what he is. Lovelace, you swine, what are you?"

"Confound you, man!" shouted the enraged three-quarter. "Who the hell——"

"Lovelace," broke in Trundle, "I think you may keep your reflections on the future life till afterwards. We will sit in alphabetical order."

It is incredible how long it takes for ten boys to change their places. It was a long process. Books fell to the right and to the left. There were murmurs of "Damn you, man, that's my grammar!" or "Confound you, Benson!" "Where the hell is my dictionary?" Twice Benson had been sent flying into the waste-paper basket; three times had Dyke driven a compass into the backside of Forbes, who looked like going to sleep. To crown everything, Briault gave his celebrated imitation of a dog-fight. Consternation reigned. Lovelace tried to hide under Trundle's desk; Gordon endeavoured to get through a window that was hardly a foot square. Macdonald's classroom was just the other side of the V. A green; he chuckled to himself. "I hoped Caruthers would enjoy himself. I think we shall have to put him on to construe when he returns. If he goes to music-hall shows in school time he must pay for it, you know."

There was an immense scuffling of feet, but much louder rang the noise of the French students. A question had arisen as to what book they should read that term. Every-

one was shouting the name of his favourite author. "Let's do *The Little Thing*," yelled Dyke. "No; de Maupassant," shouted Mansell, adding, in an undertone: "I saw one of his books in a shop in Villiers Street, looked pretty hot stuff." Then louder again: "Let's have de Maupassant." "No; *The Black Tulip*," Lovelace implored, and went on in a stage whisper: "Now don't be silly fools, I have got a crib of this. Have some sense." "You don't imagine we're going to prepare the stuff, do you?" was Hunter's retort. Above the uproar Forbes' voice drawled: "I say, if there's a French translation of *Five Nights*, let's read that. I know the book pretty well by heart."

It was ultimately decided to read *six contes* by François Coppée; but by the time the decision had been reached, the hour had been exhausted. Rather sadly Trundle watched the set pour out into the cloister, shouting and laughing. Even masters have souls. Boys don't realise this.

Every day till the end of the term that farce continued. Sometimes Trundle lost his temper. One day, Archie was singing: *Meet me under the Roses*, while Gordon was giving a lively if inaccurate translation.

"Fletcher, stop that singing!"

"Mayn't I sing, sir?"

"Of course not. This is a class-room."

"Is it, sir? I thought it was a place of amusement."

"Fifty lines, Fletcher."

"But, sir, it is, you know——"

"One hundred lines, Fletcher."

"Really, sir——"

"One hundred and fifty lines, Fletcher."

Fletcher collapsed. Next morning a magnificent blue envelope, sealed at every corner, arrived at Mr Trundle's house. It contained a vast quantity of blank paper.

"But, sir, I really thought I put in the lines. Hunter, you swine, that is your fault. Sir, I believe Hunter stole them. He had a big imposition for the Chief. You dirty dog, Hunter. May I kick him, sir?"

"No; sit down, Fletcher."

The lines were never done.

One day Collins was put on to construe. Of course he had made no attempt to prepare it. This was at once evident.

"Collins, have you prepared this?"

"No, sir."

"But why not?"

Collins had seen *Charley's Aunt* in the holidays. "Ah, why?" was his laconic answer.

Trundle foamed with wrath. He snatched a cane from under his desk and advanced on Collins. The prospective victim leapt back and pointed at him with theatrical calm: "Look, he is coming at me with cane in hand. Ha! he comes! he comes! see how he comes."

Trundle launched a fierce blow at Collins, and only narrowly missed Benson's eyes. Collins delivered a short lecture on the danger of losing one's temper. Trundle returned to his desk.

As the term went on the ragging became more elaborate. At first the set was content with giving a sort of low comedian, knockabout performance. But they soon wearied of such things. After all, they were real artistes. And Archie Fletcher could not hear being ordinary. But still there was a good deal of sport to be got out of quite commonplace manœuvres. The introduction of electric snuff, for instance, may not be very original; but it was most certainly remarkably successful.

Trundle had a habit of leaving his mark-book in his desk, and Lovelace had a key that fitted it. The rest was simple. During evening hall Hunter and Lovelace got leave to fetch a book from their class-room. There was no one about. In five minutes Trundle's mark-book was filled with snuff. Next morning the set assembled. Forbes was asleep, Benson was furtively looking up a word in his dictionary, the School House contingent was uncommonly quiet.

"Well," said Trundle, "who shall we start off with this morning? Let me see, ah!" he opened his mark-book.

The roar of laughter was heard the other side of the

court. For a full three minutes Trundle was utterly, gorgeously prostrate with coughing and sneezing.

Mansell was very sympathetic.

"Have you a cold, sir? I hope it's nothing serious, sir. I find the east wind a little trying myself. Do you ever use Fletcher's cough lozenges? Very efficacious, sir," he babbled on.

At last Trundle recovered his wind if not his temper. He glowered at the form.

"Fletcher, translate, please."

Fletcher began. But he did not get very far. Hunter let loose another wave of snuff. The whole form was now coughing and sneezing certainly considerably more than was necessary.

"Next boy who sneezes I shall give a hundred lines to, and report him to the Headmaster."

Temporary peace ensued. It is not pleasant to be sent up to the Chief; and weak masters have not the slightest scruple in doing so. The strong men need not report. But a man like Archie could not be kept in order long. He gave vent to a most unpleasant snort.

"Fletcher, if you do that again I shall have to beat you."

A slight pause.

"Please, sir, may I blow my nose if I mayn't sniff?"

"Yes, Fletcher; don't be stupid."

Immediately there rose a chorus of "Mayn't we blow our noses, too, sir? Why should Fletcher be the only one allowed to. It isn't fair."

Trundle gave way, and the rest of the hour was spent entirely in coughing, shouting and sneezing. No work was done. But that was no unusual occurrence in the extra French set.

This was, of course, the sort of amusement that could be only indulged in once. It would grow stale a second time. But Briault's idea of fancy dress was one that presented infinite opportunities and gave full scope for originality. At first nothing very startling occurred. On a freezing cold day the whole set would assemble without waistcoats

and with their coats wide open would complain bitterly of the heat ; on a warm day they would go in arrayed as for an Antarctic expedition in wonderful scarves and huge gloves.

" It's disgraceful, sir, how cold this room is," Gordon complained. " I am very sensitive to cold, and there are two windows open. They must be shut."

" Well, Caruthers, if you find this room too cold," replied Trundle sarcastically, " you may return to the warmth of your own study and write me out the lesson ten times. Do you prefer that ? "

Trundle thought that rather smart, but Gordon was never beaten.

" Sir, I do prefer an unfairly long imposition to an attack of pneumonia," and with that he sailed out of the room ; the " impot " was, of course, never done. Only Benson did things for Trundle.

From this day on to discover a new kind of dress was the aim of Archie's life. What he devised the form always copied. One day the Chief gave out an order that, owing to the extreme cold, woollen waistcoats would be allowed, provided they were of a quiet colour. That night Archie searched the studies. For sixpence he purchased from a new boy a threadbare carpet that had not been brushed or cleaned for generations. This he cut up into six parts, and each School House member of the set somehow or other made for himself a waistcoat out of them. Next day, garbed in these, they rolled sedately to Trundle's, their coats flung open, their hands in their trouser pockets.

Trundle sat speechless. At last he found words.

" What is the meaning of this confounded impertinence ? Collins, Mansell, Caruthers, Hunter, Lovelace, and you, Fletcher, take off that filthy stuff."

" That stuff, sir," drawled out Forbes. " What stuff ? "

" Don't interfere, Forbes," rapped out Trundle. " Take them off, I say."

" Oh, do you mean our waistcoats, sir ? " asked Hunter, in superbly feigned surprise. " We couldn't take them off ; we should catch a cold. The Headmaster has just

given out a notice about them. He said we could wear them."

"He never gave you permission to garb yourselves in the refuse of the neighbourhood."

"Refuse?" said Forbes. "Those waistcoats are of a most fashionable cut. It's extremely hard to get that particular brand of cloth; my brother, who is a member of the Bullingdon, told me——"

"I don't want to know anything about your brother, Forbes. Take off those things. The Headmaster would never allow them."

"But, sir," insisted Archie. "He only said that they must be of a quiet colour, and they are of a quiet colour, aren't they, sir?"

In truth they were. There was not a trace of colour visible anywhere. Trundle gave in. He murmured something about asking the Headmaster, and then put on Archie to con. He never asked the Chief; and there was no need for him to do so. It is not pleasant wearing dust-laden carpets for an hour. Such jests can only be undertaken at rare intervals.

But the culminating point was not reached till the last Thursday of the term. It was boat-race day, and the set unanimously backed Oxford. At ten o'clock the set was due to appear. But when Trundle arrived all he found was Benson, who was in nervous apprehension lest he should have come to the wrong room. If he had, he might lose some marks; and marks were more to him than many boundaries. He smiled happily at Trundle.

"Ah, where are the rest, Benson?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Oh, well, I suppose we must wait, but it is a great nuisance. I wanted to finish the book to-day, it's our last lesson, you know."

The next day was Good Friday.

For ten minutes they sat in silence. It takes a long time to prepare a big rag; the curtain very seldom goes up punctually on the first night; and there had been no dress rehearsal. There was a sound of scuffling from the door

in the cloister which led into the School House studies. Then came the tread of measured feet. The door opened, and the great procession entered.

At the head was Gordon in Ferguson's dressing-gown (a great white confection with pale pink frogs) with a white Colts' cap on his head ; he beat time with a small swagger cane. Then came the trumpeters, Crosbie and Forbes, who were producing strange harmonies on two pipes that they had bagged from the armoury. Behind them Mansell walked in corps clothes and a Second Fifteen cap. He was chanting a low dirge. On each side of him marched the choristers, Lovelace and Hunter, in white sheets and enormous psalters that they had borrowed from the chapel. They also sang in a strange outlandish tongue. But the *pièce de resistance* was the banner. It consisted of a long piece of white calico on which was inscribed in red ink : "Up, Up, Oxford. Down with the Cantabs." (Trundle hailed from Emmanuel.) It was fastened at each end to a hockey stick, and Fletcher and Collins bore it in solemnly. In the rear, Briault gave his impressions of a cow being ill. Dyke was the showman.

"I will now present, gentlemen," he began, "my circus of touring artistes, who are raising a fund for the endowment of the Oxford boating club. I must beg you all——"

But Trundle cut short the oration. Seizing a cane, he rushed into the cavalcade of Isis, and smote out full lustily. Pandemonium broke forth. No battle-field was more rich in groans ; no revue chorus produced so much noise. It took a quarter of an hour to obtain quiet. But at last a motley crowd sat down to study François Coppée.

And then came the *dénouement.* It was entirely unexpected and entirely unrehearsed. There was a knock outside. The door opened and an amazing apparition appeared on the threshold. Betteridge was in the Sixth. Very enviously the night before he had listened to the preparations and plans of the extra French set : cursing inwardly, he had sat down at ten o'clock to do prose with the Chief. Faintly across the court were borne the sounds

of strife. He groaned within him. Suddenly the Chief stood up.

"I find I shall have to leave you for a little. Some parents are coming to interview me. I want you all to return quietly to your studies, and continue the prose there."

Joyfully the Sixth trooped out. Betteridge rushed across the courts to Trundle's class-room. For a second he listened outside, then a great idea struck him. There was still half-an-hour left. Madly he tore up to the dormitories. Luckily they were not locked. Five minutes later he appeared before Mr Henry Trundle entirely changed. He had on a very light brown suit, a pair of check spats, a rainbow-coloured waistcoat, a heliotrope bow tie; a bowler was balanced on his head at an angle of forty-five degrees, a camera was slung round his neck, in his hand he had a notebook and pencil.

"Mr Trundle, I believe," he said. "I am the reporter of *The Fernhurst Gazette*. We have received a wire that there has been a great pro-Oxford demonstration in here, and we want to get an account of it in the stop press news before our sister journal, *The Western Evening Transcript*. Can you give me some notes?"

As he stopped, the set, that had remained spellbound, burst into a hilarious shriek of joy. Everyone heard it; even Claremont woke up and asked what it was. Arthur, the school *custos*, talks of it to this day.

And at this point the Chief comes into the story. He was showing the parents in question round the studies when he heard an uproar proceeding from somewhere near the cloisters. He excused himself from the parents, ran downstairs, and tracked the noise to Trundle's class-room. He entered. Never before had he seen disorder on such a generous scale. He looked round.

"Mr Trundle—er—what er—set is this?"

"The extra French set, Headmaster."

The Chief half smiled. He walked out without another word.

Next term there was no extra French set.

The ragging of Trundle, however, was merely regarded as a relaxation from the serious business of life. In an Easter term football is the only thing that any respectable man will really worry about. And Gordon, judged on these grounds, and his friends with him, would most certainly pass into the most select society circle. The Thirds this year was a terribly perplexing problem. Simonds had not taken enough trouble with his juniors the term before. This term he was working hard enough, but it was a bit late in the day to begin. On the first Saturday of the term a scratch side took sixty-five points off the prospective Thirds side.

"If you play as badly as that on the day you'll lose by forty points," growled Simonds, "and you'll damned well deserve a beating, too."

"Curse the man," muttered Lovelace. "Whose bloody fault is it but his, I should like to know? He is a disgrace to the House, working for some rotten scholarship when he ought to be training on our juniors. Rotten swine."

"Well, he's pretty well all right this term, at any rate," said Gordon. "For the Lord's sake don't go grousing about, or we sha'n't keep the score under eighty, let alone ninety. If we lose, we lose; and, my God, we'll make 'em play for it."

The side certainly tried hard, and Simonds did his best, but all the same, on the day of the match, Buller's were backing their chances of running up a score of over thirty points at three to one.

"The swine!" said Gordon. "Swanking it about how they are going to lick us to bits. My word, I would give something to smash them to smithereens. I have taken on a bet with every man in Buller's whom I found offering long odds. I stand to win quite a lot. And I shall win it."

"God's truth," said Mansell, "do they think there's no guts left in the House at all? They may go gassing about the number of Colts' badges they have got, but they are not used to our way of playing. We go for the ball, and if a man's in the light we knock him out of it. School House footer is not pretty to look at; but it's the real thing, not a sort of nursery affair. We go in to win."

Just before lunch a typical telegram from Meredith was pinned up on the House board:

"Go it House. And give them——"

The blank was left to the imagination. The House remembered Meredith and filled it in accordingly.

Nothing is more horrible than the morning before a first House match. Gordon woke happy and expectant, but by break he had begun to feel a little shivery, and at lunch-time he was done to the world. He ate nothing, answered questions in vague monosyllables, and smiled half nervously at everyone in general. He was suffering from the worst kind of stage fright. And after all, to play in an important match before the whole school is a fairly terrifying experience. As he sat trembling in the pavilion, waiting for the whistle to blow, Gordon would have welcomed any form of death, anything to save him from the ordeal before him. The whistle blew at last. As he walked out from the pavilion in his magenta-and-black jersey, an unspeakable terror gripped him; his knees became very weak; his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, and then something seemed to snap in his brain. He walked on quite cheerfully. He was as a spectator. It seemed that it was not really he, but his ghost that was walking on to the field. Subconsciously he lined up with the rest. The School side in their white jerseys, the Colts with their red dragons, seemed miles away. Collins kicked off. Gordon did not know he was playing. A roar of "House" rose from the touch-line. Involuntarily he joined it, thinking himself a looker-on, then suddenly Livingstone, the Buller's inside three-quarter, caught the ball and ran towards him. At once, Gordon was himself. He forgot the crowd on the touch-line, forgot his nervousness, forgot everything except that he was playing for the House, and somehow or other had to drive the ball over that line. He crashed into Livingstone, and the pair rolled into touch. A cheer rippled down the line. Gordon did not hear it.

The Fernhurstian described this match as "perhaps

the finest ever witnessed on the School ground," and the reporter was not far wrong. Certainly that first mad rush of the House forwards was the most glorious moment in Gordon's football career. It was all so unexpected, so essentially wonderful. On the touch-line Mansell shouted himself hoarse. The cries of " House " completely drowned those of " School." For the first quarter of an hour the School pack never got the ball out of their half. It seemed that the House must score. Time after time, the School were forced to touch down. Stewart was brought down just the wrong side of the line. Lovelace performed prodigies of valour. A gloom descended over Buller's. On the Masters' side of the line " the Bull " fumed and ground his teeth : " Go low, Reice, you stinking little funk. Get round, forwards, and shove ; you are slacking, the lot of you. Buck up, Philson." Up and down he stamped, cursing at his men. Lovelace could hardly refrain from laughing.

" Now, lads," shouted Stewart, " fair or foul ; shove the ball over the line ! " Like a sledge-hammer Gordon crashed into the scrum. Wilkinson was in his light, but Gordon was seeing red, his feet stamped on Wilkinson, and found the ball. His elbows swung viciously, as he cut his way through the scrum. Then someone caught him by the ankle. He went down hard. A boot caught him on the side of the head. He got up blind with wrath. " Fight ! Fight ! " he yelled. The House grovel swarmed in ; the outhouse pack shivered for a moment, then gave way. Collins and Gordon burst through, the ball at their toes ; Wilkinson dashed across and dived for the ball ; he clawed it for a second, Gordon's feet smashed it from his hands, and Collins steered it past the back, and kicked it just over the line and fell on top of it.

From the touch-line there burst a roar that must have been heard five miles away. " Well done, laddie ! " bawled Mansell. Even Ferguson waved his stick in the air. It was a great moment.

As the School lined up behind their line, " the Bull " strode behind them. " What are you doing ? Put some

life into your game. Buck up, all of you; it is a filthy show. Guts!"

Lovelace took the kick. It was far out: the ball hardly rose from the ground. In a state of feverish panic Livingstone dropped out. For a second or two the School pressed. But it was impossible to withstand the wild attack of the House for long. Collins, elated by his success, brought off a magnificent dribble, and was forced into touch only a few yards from the line. Half-time was not far off. And the House struggled fiercely to get over the line once more. Up and down between the goal line and the twenty-five the two scrums fought. It seemed only a matter of time for another try to send the House across with a lead of six points; but there is as much luck in rugger as in any game. The House had heeled perfectly, Foster cut past one man, and passed out to Richards. A roar of "House!" went up. A try was imminent, Richards passed to Lovelace. But Livingstone was one of those three-quarters who will miss an easy kick one minute and bring off a superb collar the next. As Richards passed, he dashed between him and Lovelace, intercepted the pass, and raced up the field. Collins caught him only a foot away from the line, and from the line out Grienburg, a heavy Buller forward, caught the ball and fell over the line by the flag, just as the whistle was about to blow for half-time. It was very far out, and the kick failed. The sides crossed over 3-3.

Simonds came on during the interval almost incoherent with excitement. "Splendid, you fellows! Magnificent! Never saw anything like it. Stick to it and you're bound to win. Simply putrid luck that last try . . . keep it up!"

On the touch-line there was no doubt as to the final result. "We shall walk away with the Cup," said Mansell, and in a far corner Jones-Evans was laying ten to one on the House in muffins. But a bit of good luck is capable of making a side play in a totally different spirit, and the combined Buller's and Claremont's side started off like a whirlwind. Livingstone kicked off, and the outhouse scrum was on the ball in a minute. For a second the House pack was swept off its feet, and during that second Fitzgerald had dribbled

to within ten yards of the line. Foster made a splendid effort to stay the rush, and flung himself on the very feet of the opposing forwards. But the check was only momentary ; the forwards rolled on, and it was only on the very line that Lovelace rushed across, and falling on the ball, held it to him, till the House forwards had time to come round. But the rules lay down that a player, as soon as he has fallen on the ball, must get off it at once. Lovelace realised that if he did so, a try would be inevitable. He hung on like grim death, praying that the referee would not see. Before half the House forwards had formed round, the whistle blew.

" Free kick to the School. You mustn't lie on the ball like that, Lovelace." The referee was not blind.

Anxiously the House lined up and waited for the kick. Livingstone had converted nearly every goal on the Colts' games the term before. It was a trying moment. He seemed to take hours placing the ball correctly. There was an absolute hush as he ran up ; then a great sigh, half of relief, half of disappointment, burst from the touch-line. The ball rose hardly six feet from the ground, and sailed harmlessly towards the School House line. And then Turner made a mistake that he cursed himself for ever afterwards. All that was necessary to do was to let the ball bounce, and then touch down. But as the ball sailed towards him, Turner was suddenly possessed with the longing to do something brilliant. He was last man on the list, and had only been put into the side at the last moment, owing to another forward stopping out. It was not unnatural. He caught the ball.

" You blasted fool," yelled out Richards, " for God's sake find touch."

Turner lost his head. He gave a mild punt down field, and before the House had realised what was happening, Wilkinson had caught the ball, and dashed over the line between the posts. This time Livingstone made no mistake. 8-3.

For the next five minutes the House side was entirely demoralised. Nothing went right. The forwards did not

keep together. Gordon cursed foully, and only made matters worse. Lovelace's kicks only found touch a few feet down the line. Richards rushed up and down fuming, and upset everyone. It was due only to a miracle and some fine work by Foster that the School did not score at least three times. Foster did everything during those awful minutes. Rush after rush he stopped, just as Fitzgerald was looking dangerous, and he brought down his fly-half every time. Gordon was amazed at his performance; he had always rather looked down on him before. He had never imagined he was so plucky.

But it takes more than two unexpected tries to throw a School House side off its balance for long. Soon the forwards began to reassert themselves. Burgess the wing three-quarter, a self-satisfied member of Buller's, who was in VI. B, and whose conceit far excelled his performances, got away and began to look dangerous. But Gordon came up behind him. He loathed Burgess, and flinging aside all the Fernhurst traditions about collaring low, he leapt in the air, and crashed on top of him. Burgess collapsed like paper. A great howl went up from the School House. New life seemed to enter into the side. The grovel flocked round, and Collins, heaving Burgess off the ball with a flying kick, dribbled the ball to the half-way line. A scrum formed up and from the heel Richards got the ball to Lovelace, who broke through the defence and with a clear field ahead made for the line.

"Run like hell!" shouted Simonds from the touch-line. He was standing on the masters' side of the ground, just in front of the Chief's wife. But he was past caring about social etiquette. All he wanted was to see the House ahead once more. "Faster, man, run—oh, damn!"

Just on the line the ubiquitous Livingstone caught him up, and the pair rolled into touch. If, as some say, there is nothing much finer to watch in football than an uphill fight, then the Thirds of 1913 was most certainly the greatest game ever played on the Lower. Lighter and slower than their opponents, the House kept them on the defensive for the rest of the afternoon. Collins was

a splendid sight, his hair fell in a cascade over his eyes, his nose was bleeding, his jersey was torn half off his back, but he did not care. His feet were everywhere, and anyone who got in his light was sorry for it. Turner, with the thought that he was the cause of Wilkinson's try, fought heroically. Once when Williamson, a Claremont's forward, began to dribble, he rushed into him sideways and with a "soccerbarge" knocked him flying into touch, and took the ball back inside the twenty-five. It was a great fight. But no one can strive successfully against the will of the gods, and certainly the stars in their courses fought against the House. Ten minutes before time Livingstone, who had been systematically starved the whole game, got a pass about the half-way line. He was the fastest man in the field. No one could touch him; he made straight for the corner flag, and scored amid the tumultuous applause of Buller's. There could be no doubt about the result now. Before the eyes of Jones-Evans there rose a prospect of eternally treating outhouse men to muffins. Mansell swore violently. "The Bull" walked up and down the touch-line beaming with delight. Simonds was silent.

"Well, you men," said Richards, "we've been beaten, but by heaven we'll shove them the last few minutes. Go for them, tooth and nail."

The House did so. In hall that night Burgess announced that there was not a single gentleman in the School House, a remark which resulted in a rather unpleasant half-hour with "the Bull" two days later. For these last minutes produced one of the most glorious charges of the day. From the twenty-five right in to the School half, the ball was carried. Nothing could stop that wild rush. Livingstone and Wilkinson went down before it, but they were passed by. Burgess made a half-hearted attempt to fall on the ball, but did not get up for several seconds, and the House was well in the School half when Gordon kicked a little too hard and the School back, fielding the ball, managed to find touch. But the House was still undaunted. From the line out, the ball was flung to Richards, who, putting his head down, literally fought his way through

the scrum and tottered out the other side. He handed off Wilkinson, dodged the fly-half, and made for the centre of the ground. Livingstone came across at him. "With you, Richards," yelled Lovelace.

As Livingstone brought Richards crashing to the ground, the ball was safely in Lovelace's hands. Lovelace was about half-way between mid-field and the twenty-five. He ran a few yards, steadied himself, and took a drop.

In deadly silence the School watched the flight of the ball. It sailed high and straight towards the goal. "It's over," murmured the Chief excitedly. But as the ball neared the posts it travelled slower, a slight breeze caught it, blew it over to the right. It hit the right post and fell back into play. As the full-back returned it to mid-field the whistle blew for no-side.

"School, three cheers for the House!" shouted Livingstone.

"House, three cheers for the School!" responded Richards.

And then everyone poured over the ropes on to the field.

"Never mind, you men," said Simonds; "it was a damned fine show and better than fifty wins."

The House was proud of its side. As the Fifteen trooped across the courts on the way to the changing-room the House lined up by the chains of the Sixth Form green, and cheered them.

"Well played, Caruthers!" shouted someone.

It was Gordon's first taste of real success.

That night there was a big feed in No. 19. They were all out of training for three days; and they made the most of it. During the last fortnight they had been allowed only fruit between meals.

"It's the finest performance since I've been in the House," Mansell declared. "Meredith's Two Cock wasn't in it. Their side was twice as strong on paper, and my Lord, we gave it them."

"Yes," said Lovelace, "and you wait till this side is the Three Cock; there'll be a bit of a change then."

"You're right there," shouted Mansell. "We sha'n't

pull it off this year, nor the year after that; but you wait and see what'll happen in 1915. That's the year when the House will revive the great days of Trench. My lads, we sha'n't regret the lean years when the years of plenty come; and the Three Cock Cup is back on the old oak sideboard. Our day will come."

That night Gordon dreamt of the great future that was opening out for the House; and he was thankful that he should see it. Like the runners in the torch race many would have prepared the way for victory; but it was to him and his friends that the glory of the final triumph would belong. For he would win the race: he would carry home the torch.

CHAPTER III

TIN GODS

After this match a new phase in Gordon's life may be said to have begun. He had for the first time felt what it was to be really successful. When he had got his Colts' cap the world had seemed at his feet ; but it was nothing to what he experienced now. For he had borne the brunt of the House's battle. He had played a principal part in a wonderful achievement. The House looked on him as one of their chosen defenders. He was in the limelight, and he had no intention of ever drifting out of it. When we have experienced the really great, the things that pleased once charm no more. After basking in the blaze of a summer afternoon there is something poignantly pathetic in watching the amber beams of a December sun filter through the trees. Gordon had his fingers on the pedestal of fame, and he intended never to loose his grasp. His position had been obtained by brilliant football, and if he had been able to retain it in the same way all would have been well. But the gods willed it otherwise.

It was generally admitted that the House stood no chance of winning the Two Cock, and when the House agreed on its own defeat, prospects were certainly very gloomy. So Gordon only interested himself in his own performances. He began to wonder if there was any chance of his getting a place in the Three Cock. Simonds was undoubtedly pleased with him, and Henry, the only forward senior to him, had been doing rather badly lately. In the trial games he played with a mad enthusiasm. On the Friday evening the Two Cock side was posted. He was above Lovelace and Richards. Henry was only one above him.

Just before lunch on the day of the match Mansell came up to him.

"I say, I have got some good news for you."

"What is it?" Gordon was feverish with impatience.

"Well, I don't think I had better tell you."

"Oh, I say, do; don't be a swine."

"No, I don't think I shall; it would make you too bucked with life." Mansell smiled at him kindly. Gordon was rather annoyed.

But on the way down to hall, he overheard Mansell talking to Tester in the door of the changing-room.

"Simonds is going to play Caruthers in the Three Cock instead of Henry, if he plays at all decently to-day," Mansell was saying.

"Oh, I am glad of that," Tester answered. "He's a good kid."

The earth swayed dizzily as Gordon made his way down to hall. He did not feel at all nervous. He was quite certain of himself. The day was bound to end with him a member of the House Fifteen. All he had to do was to play his average game. Mansell had said so.

As he stepped on to the field, he was perfectly aware of his own personality. He did not feel a sort of spectator, as he had done in the Thirds. It was all so clear. He even smiled at Tester as he lined up.

But a Two Cock is very different from a Thirds. Men from Christy's were playing who were shining lights on Senior Leagues, and who would easily have got their Seconds if they had tried, but who, because they were in Christy's, did not take the trouble. Christy's should have beaten Buller's, but they were too slack to go into proper training, and in spite of the brilliance of Dyke and Pemberton, Buller's won by six points after being ten points behind at half-time. As individuals, however, Christy's were a formidable lot, and when combined with Buller's formed a much heavier and larger side than any Gordon had ever played against before. He was not very large, and was used to Junior Leagues. For an hour he was swept clean off his feet. He could not keep pace at all

with the game. He was flung from one position into another; he followed after the scrum; he felt like a new boy playing for the first time. At half-time Simonds came up thoroughly fed up with life. The score was fifteen-nothing.

"For heaven's sake, Caruthers, get in and shove, if you can't do anything better. You haven't done a thing the whole game."

The game was a nightmare. Mansell looked at him curiously that evening at tea.

Gordon muttered something about a kick on the head, and being unable to see anything.

On Sunday evening a list of those in training for the Three Cock was put up. There were ten forwards down. Gordon was bottom on the list; both Henry and Collins were above him. In the football world his claim to fame for the moment faded away. If he was to remain in the public gaze, he would have to attract attention some other way.

And so, at the most critical point in the development of his character, Gordon began all unconsciously to seek for new ways of making himself conspicuous. He did not know what he was doing. If someone had told him that he was doing absurd things merely to get talked about, he would have laughed. But all the same, it would have been true. His preparatory schoolmaster said of him once: "There is some danger of his becoming the school buffoon." At his prep. the boys were too closely looked after and kept down for any one person to become pre-eminent at anything. And so a subconscious love of notoriety drove Gordon on to play the fool for a whole term most damnably.

It was during the end of the Easter and the whole of the summer term that Gordon earned a reputation for reckless bravado and disregard of all authority that stuck to him through his whole career. Up till now he had done things merely because he had wanted to. He followed the inclination of the moment, but now it was different. It is pleasant to be talked of as a mixture between Don Juan and Puck; and Gordon was sufficiently good at games to

make himself an attractive and not a repulsive figure. The Public School boy admires the Meredith type; he despises the man who is no good at games, and who plays fast and loose in his house. Gordon was not unpopular, and indeed some of his escapades were really funny, as, for instance, when he cut through the string of the chapel organ on which a weight is attached to show whether the organ is full of air or not. The next morning in chapel the choir began but the organ was mute. The hymn broke off into a miserable wail. The whole service was one silent ripple of merriment. Rogers was taking the service, and was quite at sea without the help of music. Gordon earned a considerable measure of notoriety for the performance. On his way to the tuck shop, Ben, the captain of the Fifteen, came up and spoke to him.

"Caruthers, I say, are you the man who made the organ mute?"

"Yes."

"By Jove, you are a sportsman."

Gordon was thus encouraged to continue on his road of buffoonery, and when the summer term came, he found no reason to pursue any other course. On the cricket field he could not get a run; first he hit wildly, then he began to poke; but all without the least success. After a few weeks he almost ceased to try, except in House matches. "The Bull" got furious.

"Look here, Caruthers," he said, "I don't know if you are slack, or merely incompetent. But when I see you make fifty against my house in a Junior House match, and then play inside half-volleys on the upper, I begin to think all you care about is your house. Don't you care for Fernhurst, boy?"

Gordon was genuinely worried about this. He admired "the Bull" immensely: indeed, "the Bull" was about the only person at Fernhurst whose opinion he valued at all. He made strenuous efforts to get runs, but it was no use. He was clean out of form. His fifty *v.* Buller's was his only score during the season, but "the Bull" did not know this. He thought Caruthers tried for his house and

slacked with the Colts. The climax was reached during the Milton Match. Gordon went in first with Foster. In five minutes he and Lovelace and a man from Claremont's were out for four runs. "The Bull" chewed grass in a far corner of the field.

And then, to crown everything, Gordon missed the easiest of catches. He caught Lovelace's eye. It was really rather funny. The two of them burst into sudden laughter. Lovelace was nearly doubled up. "The Bull" thought they were laughing at him.

"I can't think what's gone wrong with Caruthers this term," he said to Fry, the captain of the School House. "He was such a jolly good man once; he doesn't seem to be trying this term."

Next day Gordon was left out of the Colts' side. The day after the chair in Trundle's class-room suddenly collapsed. The leg had been sawn half through, and Trundle fell over on the floor.

Gordon was riding for a fall, and two days before Commemoration, to use his own phrase, he "fairly put his foot in it." This term he had a double dormitory with one Davenport, a scholar who was a year junior to Gordon; but was in the same form. The Chief had thought Gordon a bit big for the Nursery, but there was no room for him down below; so he and Davenport lived at the end of the passage in glorious isolation. It was a great luxury; they were allowed several privileges; they could keep their light on till ten; they could go to bed when they liked, and it was here that they usually did their preparation. Davenport, however, suddenly contracted measles; and Gordon, who had grown too slack to do his work alone, used to get leave for Sydenham, a rather insignificant, self-righteous member of V. A, who had come a term before him, to come and prepare his work in the double room. Leave was always granted, and when Davenport returned, the scheme was still continued. On this particular night, Davenport had got a headache. He said he was going to stop out next day, and quite refused to prepare Thucydides. It also happened that the House tutor was away that night,

and so the Chief went round the dormitories, putting out the lights. He did not know of the custom by which Sydenham came up to do the con. He was not very pleased, but after a little hesitation gave leave. The door was shut. Sydenham perched himself on the chest of drawers, Gordon produced an aid to quick translation, Davenport turned over the pages of *Nash's*. The Abbey bells also happened to be ringing that night. It was quite impossible to hear any normal sound down the passage; and so Gordon was quite unaware of the Chief's intention to revisit them and see if they were really working, till the door opened and the Chief walked in. Gordon lost his head; he sat up in bed and gaped. Thucydides lay on one side of the bed, the crib on the other.

The Chief picked up the book.

"Ah, does Mr Macdonald allow you to use this?"

In the really dramatic moments of our lives it is always the inane that first suggests itself. It was so likely that Macdonald would have given them permission.

"No, sir."

"Er, Davenport, are you preparing—er yes, Thucydides with Caruthers, too?"

"No, sir." Davenport thanked heaven that he had a headache. He had helped in the work of deceit every night the whole term. The Chief thought he must be a boy of strong moral courage; and in many ways he was, but cribbing, after all, was part of the daily routine.

The Chief took up the book.

"Sydenham, go back to your study."

He turned down the light and went out. His footsteps died out down the passage.

"Damn!" said Gordon.

"*In excelsis gloria*," said Davenport.

"And it was a rotten crib, too," said Gordon.

By next morning the story was all round the school.

"You will be birched for certain," was Tester's cheerful comment, "and serve you right for getting caught."

"I sha'n't be such a fool again," growled Caruthers.

And certainly he profited by his experience. A year

later the House Tutor came into his study when he was preparing Vergil with the aid of Dr Giles' text. He put a piece of blotting-paper over the crib, and chatted for a few minutes quite easily about the chances of the Eleven *v.* Tonford.

But when we are in trouble, there are few of us who can see so far ahead as to feel thankful at the thought that we have learnt something that will be a help to us in the future. Gordon was thoroughly fed up. But it was not his game to show his feelings. He went about laughing as though nothing had happened at all; he treated the whole thing as a colossal joke. Sydenham was, however, very nervous, and showed it. Gordon ragged him mercilessly.

"My good man, what the hell does it matter? Chief's not much of a bircher, and don't gas about disgrace, and such muck. This isn't a St Winifred's sort of school. It will only mean a bad report."

In School that day Gordon was in great form. By the end of the morning he had accumulated in all three hundred lines from various sources for ragging.

"That man, Caruthers, is some fellow," said Ferguson to Simonds at lunch. "He looks as if he enjoyed being in rows."

"Perhaps he does," was the answer. "He is certainly always doing his best to get into them. But he is in for a birching this time."

But Simonds was wrong. The Chief was too utterly fed up to do anything; moroever, he saw that a birching would do Gordon no good. He would only boast about it.

It was not until a week after that Gordon was called up before the Chief.

"Caruthers, I want to know where you got hold of that crib."

As a matter of fact he had obtained it by means of Rudd, who had a large stock of such articles, and let them out on loan for the term. It was a paying business. Gordon, of course, could not divulge this.

"I got it in the holidays, sir."

The Chief was surprised and shocked at this. He could

quite easily understand that a boy should buy a crib at some second-hand bookshop in the town, during term time, when surrounded with the general atmosphere of Public School dishonesty; but it did seem unnatural that a boy, while living in the clean surroundings of his home, should be scheming to cheat his fellows and masters. The Chief said as much; Gordon did not quite follow him. Besides, everyone cribbed.

"What I can't understand, Caruthers," the Chief went on, "is that you always assume a tremendous keenness on the School and House, which you give absolutely no proof of in your actions except on the field. This is the second time I have had to speak to you on this subject. Do you imagine that the good reputation of the House depends solely on its performance in the Thirds, or that of the School on its number of victories in School matches?"

Gordon certainly thought it did. But he thought that "Yes" was hardly the answer the Chief expected. He held his peace. It was no use arguing the subject.

When he came out of the study, he met Rudd palpitating with funk.

"I say, you didn't say anything about my lending you that crib, did you?" Rudd was very frightened of the Chief.

"Of course not, you bloody-looking fool. The best thing you can do is to go and get me a better crib with all possible speed, my friend. And mind it's a decent one. The last one was rotten; and I can't do without one. I was bottled yesterday."

In three days Rudd's agent from town had procured him a fine edition of the Sicilian expedition. Davenport and Gordon did some superb construe during the remainder of the term.

It is, of course, very easy to run down any existing system; and the Public School system has come in for its fair share of abuse. Yet it must be remembered that no one has yet been able to devise a better. And after all, for the average man it is not such a bad training. It is inclined to destroy individuality, to turn out a fixed

pattern ; it wishes to take everyone, no matter what his tastes or ideas may be, and make him conform to its own ideals. In the process, much good is destroyed, for the Public School man is slack, easy-going, tolerant, is not easily upset by scruples, laughs at good things, smiles at bad, yet he is a fine follower. He has learnt to do what he is told ; he takes life as he sees it and is content. So far so good. With the average individual the system is not so very unsatisfactory.

But take the case of the boy who has it in him to be a leader, who is not merely content to follow, but wishes to be at the head, in the forefront of the battle. What of him ? Gordon went to Fernhurst with the determination to excel, and at once was brought face to face with the fact that success lay in a blind worship at the shrine of the god of Athleticism. Honesty, virtue, moral determination—these mattered not at all. The author of *Eric* and such others who have never faced, really faced, life and seen what it is, talk of the incalculable good one boy can do, who refuses to be led astray by temptations, and remains true to the ideals he learnt in the nursery. If there does come into any school such a boy, he is merely labelled as " pi," and is taken no notice of. He who wishes to get to the front has to strive after success on the field, and success on the field alone. This is the way that the future leaders of England are being trained to take their proper place in the national struggle for a right and far-sighted civilisation. On this alone the system stands condemned. For the history of a nation is the history of its great men, and the one object of the Public School is to produce not great men, but a satisfactory type.

Gordon found that, as soon as he was recognised as a coming athlete, popularity was his, and that on the strength of his physical abilities he could do pretty well what he liked. For there is no strong feeling in schools on the subject of honesty and morality. And it is not unnatural that a boy, finding that no one will object if he follows the call of pleasure, drifts with the stream. And then Gordon went off suddenly at games, as the best athlete must at

some time or other. Like many others, he loved popularity and fame. So, in order to keep in the limelight, he flung aside all pretences of conscience, and got the reputation of being "the devil of a sport"—a reputation that is a passport to Public School society, but is damning to any man's character. Only a few realise this. Betteridge was one. He was not an athlete, but was clever and in the Sixth. He enjoyed a rag, but saw the difference between liberty and licence. He was a freethinker, and saw life with a wide vision that embraced the whole horizon.

"Look here, Caruthers," he said one evening, during hall, in the last half of the summer term, "I don't want to say anything; but you know you are making a most awful ass of yourself."

"What do you mean?"

"You know quite well what I mean. I don't think it's your fault; it is the fault of this rotten system under which we live. You are not what you were when you first came. Of course, it is natural to crib and fool about, but you are going a bit far. One day you will be captain of this House. You'll be sorry then."

"Oh, don't be a damned ass, Betteridge, preaching to me. I know what I am doing. It's not long that I shall have to enjoy myself. I shall be in the Sixth soon, and shall have to slow down then. But at present I shall do damned well what I like. After all, what does it matter if I do rot all day and muck about generally? It makes no difference to you or the House. It's my own damned business, and besides, everyone else does it!"

It was useless to reason with him. The argument that "others do it" is impossible to combat. And, after all, environment is what counts, and it is a fairly dangerous environment with which to surround any but the average sensual being who eats, drinks, laughs and is merry, and never thinks at all. And yet masters are surprised when they find the big man whom they thought impregnable following the accepted customs. They say: "What a pity! A fine fellow gone to the dogs, and after all we've done for him, too!" And yet whose fault is it?

But this is by the wayside. For better or for worse the character of Gordon Caruthers was developing on its own lines. Criticism should be withheld till the last threads are woven, and we can judge of the complex whole.

The summer term was drawing to a close. It had not been very successful as far as Gordon was concerned. His cricket had frankly been a failure, and the prominence he had gained in his House hardly compensated for the misgivings with which the Chief and Buller regarded his future. It seemed as if he could not help running up against "the Bull."

A-K was knocked out of the Senior House competition at once. They drew Christy's and were beaten by an innings. Gordon made eleven and fifteen, and was missed three times while making them. Foster, however, got a very sturdy thirty-three not out, and took three wickets. He got his House cap. Gordon was furious, and swore that he was jolly well not going to try any more that term.

During the final senior he was strolling round the field with Tester, both of them in cloth suits, unchanged for games. "The Bull" came up behind them.

"Caruthers, why aren't you changed this afternoon?"

"Well, sir, we only had a House game this afternoon, so Tester and I got leave off to watch the match."

"But your House is not playing in it."

"No, sir."

"Well, then, what on earth do you mean by slacking about the field like this? It's your duty to be training yourself too, so that some day you may be of some use to Fernhurst, and here are you slacking about, instead of asking the pro. to give you a net. Slackness! filthy slackness! I don't know what's wrong with you this term; you were quite keen once."

He strolled off, scratching the back of his head. "The Bull" always did this when in a bad temper.

"Poor old chap," murmured Tester, "he takes these little things so much to heart. He loathes me because I don't sweat myself to death all day at the nets. He never

said anything to me; he has given me up as a bad job. Poor old chap!"

"Well, I suppose we ought to have been at the nets," said Gordon.

"If we did everything that we ought to do in this world, we should never have a moment's time to do the things we liked."

"I suppose so," said Gordon, "but still, you know—oh, well, what the hell does it matter? By Jove, well hit, Dyke!"

The conversation turned again to the match.

Next term Gordon had arranged to have a study with Lovelace. Tester was going to be a prefect, and wanted the big upstairs study that Clarke had had to himself. Gordon was staying in No. 1.

He was not sorry. He did not quite understand Tester; he was too clever, and Gordon never knew exactly what he was driving at. Lovelace, on the other hand, was his best friend; they had played together in several sides, and next term Lovelace would captain the footer Colts. The future seemed very roseate. Moreover, he was certain to get into the Sixth, and that meant many privileges. He did not have to attend rolls, he could be late for tea, there was no need for him to get leave to speak to anyone in hall. It meant many study hours, and it would also bring him into contact with the Olympians. There was Carter, who had been in the Sixth four terms, and was in the Second Fifteen. He would meet Betteridge. There was Rudd to rag. Prothero had reduced his time-table to one hour in school a day, and was an authority to consult on any subject regarding avoiding work. Davenport would be promoted, too. Gordon's day of power was beginning to dawn. Next term he would be distinctly a House blood. It was a ravishing thought.

One evening in exam. week Hunter announced casually after tea: "I say, do you remember Betteridge talking once about a man called Ferrers? Well, he is coming here as a master next term."

"Oh, Lord, is he really?" said Fletcher. "I suppose

he will be full of rotten new theories, and he will probably want to make us work."

"Well, I always give a master a good fortnight's trial before I do any work for him," said Tester; "at the end of that, I usually find his keenness has worn off. I bet he will be the same as all the rest."

"I doubt it," said Betteridge; "he is a man."

"Well, whatever he is, he is going to have no effect on me," said Gordon, with a finality that quite closed the question.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

As often as not, it is mere chance that provides the most essentially important moments in our lives. It is easy to talk of the inevitable march of Fate, but more usually a chance word or look alters our entire outlook on life. And so it was that the course of Gordon's whole career was suddenly changed into a different channel, at a moment when he was drifting placidly on the stream of a lax conventionality, and was frittering away all his opportunities for sheer lack of anything that would spur him on to a clearer conception of what life means.

During the whole of the term, Tester and Gordon had done their early morning preparation on the V. A green. As soon as they had answered their names at roll, they would take out deck-chairs and cushions and luxuriously pass the three quarters of an hour before breakfast reclining back, putting the finishing touches to the evening's work. It is a very beautiful spot, the V. A green. On three sides it is flanked with buildings; on the fourth is a low wall, which is used as an exit for nocturnal expeditions. It was under the V. A class-room that Gordon and Tester always put their chairs. Opposite them was the grey library; beyond rose the Abbey, solemn and austere; on the left was the chapel and the long cloister leading to the big school. In the early morning a great hush pervaded the place. The only sound was the faint tolling of the Almshouse bell. Between the Abbey and the library the sun rose in a blaze of glory.

On the last morning of the term Gordon and Tester lolled back in their comfortable chairs. Gordon was trying to learn his rep. for the exam. that morning. Tester was

reading *The Oxford Book of English Verse*; the exams for the Sixth were over.

"Oh, damn this," said Gordon. "I can't learn the stuff."

He flung the book down, and lay back watching the first rays of the sun flicker on the cold bronze of the Abbey.

"This has been a rotten term, you know," he said at last.

"Yes?" said Tester. He was engrossed in poetry.

"Well, I got into the deuce of a row with Chief, and I never got my House cap, and I've broken it off with Jackson."

Tester put down his book and sat up.

"Caruthers, you know you are wasting your time. Here are you with all your brilliance and your personality worrying only about House caps and petty intrigues, and little things like that. What you want to realise is that there is something beyond the aim of a Fernhurst career. You are clever enough; but poetry and art mean nothing to you."

"Oh, poetry, that's all right for Claremont and asses like that, but what's the use of it?"

"Oh, use, use! Nothing but this eternal cry about the use of a thing. Poetry is the sort of beacon-light of man. What's wrong with you is that you've read the wrong stuff. It is all very well for a middle-aged man to worship Wordsworth and calm philosophy. But youth wants colour, life, passion, the poetry of revolt. Now look here, let me read you this, and then tell me what you think of it."

"Oh, all right. Is it long?"

"No, not very."

In a low, clear voice, Tester began to read the great spring Chorus in *Atalanta*, into which Swinburne has crowded all that he ever knew of joy and happiness. In everyone there lies the love of beauty—"we needs must love the highest when we see it"—but the pity is that so few of us are ever brought face to face with the really lovely, or perhaps, if we are, we come to it too late. Our power of appreciation has lain too long dormant ever to be

aroused. And at school it is the common thing for boys to pass through their six years' traffic without ever realising what beauty is. They are told to read Vergil, Tennyson and Browning, the philosophers, the comforters of old age, poets who "had for weary feet the gift of rest." But boys never hear of Byron, Swinburne and Rossetti, men with big flaming hearts that cried for physical beauty and the loveliness of tangible things. As a result they drift out into the world, to take their place with the dull, commonplace Philistine who has made the House of Commons what it is.

But as Gordon heard Tester reading the wonderful riot of melody, which conjures up visions of rainbows, and far-receding sunsets, of dew gleaming like crystals in the morning, of water gliding like forgotten songs, a strange peace descended on him. He had not known that there could be anything so intensely beautiful. Over the great Abbey the sun was rising heavenwards; down the street past the Almshouses he heard the happy sound of a young girl laughing. The world was full of strange new things; there was a new meaning in the song of the blackbird, in the rustle of the leaves, in the whispering of the warm wind. And suddenly there came over him a sensation of how far he himself was below the splendour of it all. He had walked through life with blinded eyes; with dulled senses he had stared at the ground, while all the time the great ideal of beauty was shining from the blue mountains of man's desire.

Tester had finished reading.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, it's wonderful. I never dreamt of such music."

"Yes, you see, masters grow old; they forget what it was like to be young; they want us to look at life through their spectacles, and, of course, we can't. Youth and age is an impossible combination; we have to cut a way for ourselves, Caruthers, sometimes we fail, sometimes we succeed. I've made a pretty fair mess of things, because I have gone on my own way; because I have had no one to guide me. I found little consolation in mature thought,

and I am not one of the fools who has just taken things for granted ; I strike out by myself. I want to find what beauty really is, and I shall find it by sifting out everything first. I have probed a good many things one way and another, some ugly, some beautiful. I have followed the course of Nature. After all, Nature is more likely to be right than an artificial civilisation. I follow where my inclinations lead me. I hate laws and regulations. As I've often said, I did not ask to come into this world, so I shall do as I please, and I think that I shall reach home all right in the end. Literature is a great sign-post ! "

" Yes," said Gordon simply. " I never imagined it before. Who wrote that, by the way ? "

" Swinburne, the great pagan who was sick of the sham and pretence of his day, and cried for the glories of Rome. Look here, Caruthers, come down to Gisson's afterwards, and as a memento of our year together in Study 1, just let me give you Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads.* It's great stuff ; you'll like it, and you'll find there something a bit better than your caps and pots."

Gordon did not answer. The sun had now risen high above the Abbey. Across the silence was wafted the cracked notes of the School House bell ; there was a rush of feet from the studies. For a few minutes Gordon lay back in his chair quite quiet. A new day had broken on his life. The future opened out with wide promises, with possibilities of great things. For he had heard at last the call which, if ever a man hears it, he casts away the nets and follows after—the call of beauty—" which is, after all, only truth, seen from another side."

BOOK III.—UNRAVELLING THE THREADS

" . . and drank delight of battle with my peers."
TENNYSON.

" Yet would you tread again
All the road over?
Face the old joy and pain—
Hemlock and clover?
Yes. For it still was good,
Good to be living,
Buoyant of heart and blood;
Fighting, forgiving."
AUSTIN DOBSON.

" Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard."
LINDSAY GORDON.

CHAPTER I

COMMON ROOM FACES

MIRACLES do not happen, nor do sudden conversions. Man very rarely changes. What he is at the beginning, he is at the end; all that occurs is that at various stages of his journey he looks at life from a different point of view, or rather through a different pair of spectacles, for never on this earth do we really see things as they are. When Gordon found new influences at work upon him, when he discovered through literature that there is something higher than the ignoble monotony of the average individual routine, he did not suddenly change his whole way of life, and, "like a swimmer into cleanness leaping," put out of sight behind him the things that had pleased him once. Right and wrong are merely relative terms. What was considered right in the days of Cæsar spells social ostracism

to-day. And there are a few who prefer to see life as the Romans saw it, and to follow the ideals of power and physical beauty. For such life is not easy. Yet we are not so much better than "when Cæsar Augustus was Egypt's Lord!" The question of what is really right and what is really wrong will never be satisfactorily decided, on this earth at any rate, for we cannot all wear the same spectacles for long. Temperament is all-powerful.

And Gordon made no attempt to settle the question. He did not suddenly feel a loathing for his former pleasures, but during the long summer holidays, as he bathed in the waters of English poetry, it seemed to him as if he had outgrown them, and cast them aside. Perhaps in the future they might momentarily appear beautiful once more, but he did not think that he would ever again wear them for very long, for they were, after all, little, insignificant, trivial, and contrasted poorly with the white heat of Byron's passion, and the flaming ardour of Swinburne, that cried for "the old kingdoms of earth and their kings." Tester had been right; he had wasted himself; he had been blinded by the drab atmosphere of Public School life. And as he read on, while the summer sun sank in a red sea behind the gaunt Hampstead firs, read of the proud, domineering soul of Manfred, visualised the burst of passion that had prompted the murder in *The Last Confession*, felt the thundering paganism of the *Hymn to Proserpine*, he was overcome with a tremendous hatred for the system that had kept literature from him as a shut book, that had offered him mature philosophy instead of colour and youth, and that tried to prevent him from seeking it for himself. So this is the way, he thought, the youth of England is being brought up. Masters tell us to fix all our energies on achieving school successes, and think of calf-bound prizes and tasselled caps all day long. No wonder that, if they bind us down to trivial things, we become like the Man with the Muck-Rake, and drift on with low aims, with nothing to help us to live differently from cattle. No wonder the whole common room is repeatedly shocked by the discovery of some sordid scandal. What a system, what an education!

Gordon's soul was very arrogant and very intolerant, and it was rather unfortunate that, at a time when he was bubbling over with rebellion, Arnold Lunn's book, *The Harrovians*, should have been published. This book, as no other book has done, photographs the life of a Public School boy stripped of all sentiment, crude and raw, and is, of its kind, the finest school story written. It may have many artistic blunders; it may be shapeless and disconnected, but it is true to life in every detail; and Gordon was not likely at this time to be conscious of technical mistakes. Of course, a storm of adverse criticism broke out at once. Old Harrovians wrote to the papers, saying that they had been at Harrow for six years, and that the conversation was, except in a few ignoble exceptions, pure and manly, and that the general atmosphere was one of clean, healthy broadmindedness. Gordon fumed. What fools all these people were! When they were told the truth, they would not believe it. Prophets must prophesy smooth things, or else were not prophets. How was there ever going to be any hope of improvement till the true state of affairs was understood?

And then a sudden doubt came to Gordon. What if these old Harrovians were right? What if Mr Lunn had depicted the life of the exceptional, not of the average boy? What then of Fernhurst? He had judged the book by his own experiences. Was it possible that his school was worse than other schools, and what was usual there, would be exceptional in Harrow and Eton and Winchester? And he had been so proud of Fernhurst, with its grey cloisters and dreaming Abbey, with its magnificent Fifteen and fine boxers. He had cursed at the Public School system because he thought it had done harm to Fernhurst. What if Fernhurst and not the system were at fault? For several days the idea made him wretched.

One evening, however, during the last week of the holidays, a Mr Ainslie came to dinner. He had been a contemporary of Lunn's at Harrow, and had himself been head of his house for two years. The conversation had drifted to a discussion of recent books: *The*

Woman Thou Gavest Me, Sinister Street, The Devil's Garden, Round the Corner.

"By the way, Gordon," said Ainslie, "read that book, *The Harrovians*?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"What did you think of it?"

"I liked it very much—thought it was the finest school story I had ever read." Gordon felt rather nervous. He was aware that he was on thin ice, and timidly blurted out: "But, sir, was it true to Harrow life?"

"Absolutely; and it's as true to the life of any other Public School. They are all much the same, you know, at the root."

An immense weight was lifted from Gordon's mind.

"I thought so, sir, but such a lot of fellows wrote to the papers saying it was all rot, and I began to wonder if——"

"My dear Gordon, don't you make any mistake about it. Lunn knows what he is talking about. But you see Public School men are most priceless Philistines. They never think. They just kick a ball about, hit a four or so past cover, and then pass by, shrouding their school life in a mist of maudlin sentimentality; and so they forget what they really did. All they remember is how they ragged the "stinks" master, and pulled off the Senior cricket cup. Why, when that new house master—oh, what's his name, Lee? Well, at any rate, when he came to Lunn's house he was slowly getting rid of undesirables for terms, actually for terms. Cayley was not the only one who had to go, and, of course, no one thought of anything but games. I got a schol. there from my prep., and I literally had to live it down. It took me some time, too. We want a good deal of improvement in this rusty old system."

So after all it was the system that was at fault, not Fernhurst. . . . Fairly contentedly he went back by the three-thirty from Waterloo; but as he saw the evening sun steeping the gravel courts in shadows, and watched the fairy lights flickering behind the study panes, it came home to him with a poignant vividness that Fernhurst,

which should have been a home of dreams, innocence and beauty, had, by the inefficiency of a vacillating system, become immersed in petty intrigues, and was filled with a generation that was being taught to blind itself to the higher issues of life. From his innermost being he cursed at the narrow-mindedness of the masters who had helped to produce such a result.

But in a moment almost he was caught up in the tear and bustle of an opening term. There was the rush to the notice-board to see what dormitory he was in, who were the prefects; then the hurried interview with Chief, and the inevitable Health certificate. The meeting of the eight-ten from Exeter; prayers; the arrival of the last train; and finally sleep. The hold of tradition is very strong; in a few moments Gordon had flung aside his doubts and scruples. Arm-in-arm with Collins he rolled down to the day-room to look at the new boys. There were twelve of them in all, very frightened, very timid, huddled round the day-room fire, wondering what was before them.

"Well, Caruthers, what do you think of that lot?" said Collins, as they swaggered back again to the studies.

"Oh, not much; that fellow second from the left was not bad. What's his name, oh yes, Morcombe. Believe me, he is some stuff."

"Oh, I thought him rather a washed-out specimen, but, I say, that fat fellow looks rather a sport. You know, the man like a dormouse."

"Oh yes, that podgy lad. Morgan, he is Welsh, I know about him. He was captain of the prep. last year at football—not a bad forward, I believe. Oh, but there's Lovelace—Lovelace."

"Hullo, Caruthers."

In a huge brown coat, Lovelace charged across from the porter's lodge. "Had any cricket? What price Middlesex—below Hants, rotten county—you should watch Leicester now."

"Oh, dry up, Middlesex has had bad luck this year." The defeat at Lord's by Worcester and Kent in the same week was rather a sore point with Gordon.

"Oh, did they? I call them rotten players. But, look here, who are pres?"

"Oh, Tester, Betteridge, Clarke, Mansell, all the whole crowd."

"Good God, 'some' pres! Wait a sec. for me. I am only going to see Chief for a second. I am going to get confirmed, I think. I heard you get off some work for it. Half a sec."

Back to the old life again. Nothing was changed. The same talk, the same interests, all the old things the same. Only he was altered. He felt as if he wanted to stand on the Abbey tower, and shout aloud that the School was wasting its opportunities, and was struggling blindly in the dark, following will-o'-the-wisps. And yet, for all that, he would not have Lovelace, or Mansell or any other of his friends the least bit different. He did not quite know what he wanted. It was better to let them go on as they were. As it had been, it would be. He could not do much, and at the moment he decided that, whatever he might think or feel, he would outwardly remain the same. The world was not going to look at his soul. He would go on as he had begun, putting things behind him as he outgrew them, and as they appeared childish to him. Only a very few should ever see him as he really was. The rest would not understand him, they would think him strange, unnatural; and he did not want that.

The first few days went by in a whirl of excitement. The entrance of Ferrers, the new master, into the placid Fernhurst atmosphere caused a bit of a commotion. The school first saw him walking across the courts after the masters' meeting on the first day of term. His walk was a roll; he talked at the top of his voice, his left arm sustained a pile of books; his right arm gesticulated wildly.

"Good Gawd," said Tester, "what a bounder."

"Do you think so? I think he is the sort of man to wake up the school" said Betteridge.

"Perhaps," said Foster; "but it is rather like applying a stomach-pump to a man who is only fit for a small dose of Eno's Fruit Salt."

"Well," said Betteridge, "*nous verrons.*"

And in the bustle of a new term Ferrers was soon forgotten.

Gordon was in the Sixth, and its privileges were indeed sweet. He felt very proud as he sat in the same room with Harding, a double-first, and head of the House, and with Hazelton, the captain of the House. Though it was an ordeal to go on to "con" before them, it was very magnificent to roll down to the football field just before the game began without attending roll.

"I say, Caruthers," Lovelace would yell across the changing-room, "do buck up; it's nearly twenty-five to three, and roll is at a quarter to."

"I don't go to roll," came the lordly answer.

And he felt the eyes of admiring juniors fixed on him. It was sheer joy, too, to wear the blue ribbon of the Sixth Form and to carry a walking-stick; to stroll into shops that were to the rest of the school out of bounds; to go to the armoury and the gym. after tea without a pass. But it was in hall that the new position meant most.

While the rest of the house had to stay in their studies and make some pretence of work, he would wander indolently down the passage and pay calls. When he paused outside a study he heard the invariable sound of a novel flying into the waste-paper basket, of a paper being shoved under the table, or a cake being relegated to the window-seat. Then he came in.

A curse always greeted him.

"Oh, damn you, Caruthers, I thought it was a prefect. Foster, hoist out that cake; we were just having a meal."

He now had the freedom of the studies that had before been to him as holy places. Where once Clarke had dealt out justice with a heavy hand, Tester and he sat before the fire discussing books and life. In the games study, where once he had trembled before the rage of Lovelace major, he sat with Carter in hall preparing Thucydides. Steps would sound down the passage, a knock on the door.

"Come in," bawled Carter.

"Please, Carter, may I speak to Smith?" a nervous voice

would say. No one could talk without leave from a prefect during hall.

"Yes; and shut the outer door," Carter answered, without looking round. The prefectorial dignity seemed in a way to descend on Gordon; just then life was very good. But there were times when he would feel an uncontrollable impatience with the regime under which he lived. One of these was on the second Sunday of term. It was Rogers' turn to preach, and, as always, Gordon prepared himself for a twenty minutes' sleep till the outburst of egoistic rhetoric was spent. But this time, about half-way through, a few phrases floated through his mist of dreams that caught his attention. Rogers was talking about the impending confirmation service. With one hand on the lectern and the other brandishing his pince-nez, as was his custom when he intended to be more than usually impressive, he began the really vital part of the sermon.

"In the holidays there appeared as, I am sorry to say, I expect some of you saw, a book pretending to deal with life at one of our largest Public Schools. I say, pretending, because the book contains hardly a word of truth. The writer says that the boys are callous about religious questions and discuss matters which only grown-up people should mention in the privacy of their own studies, and still more serious, the purport of the book was to attack not only the boys but even the masters who so nobly endeavour to inculcate living ideas of purity and Christianity. I am only too well aware when I look round this chapel to-night —this chapel made sacred by so many memories—that nearly every word of that accusation is false. Yet perhaps there are times—in our mirth, shall we say?—when we are engaged in sport, or genial merriment, that we are inclined to treat sacred matters not with quite that reverence that we ought. Perhaps——"

Rogers prosed on, epithet followed epithet, egotism and arrogance vied with one another for predominance. The school lolled back in the oak seats and dreamt of house matches, rags, impositions, impending rows. At last the Chief gave out the final hymn. Into the cloisters the school

poured out, hustling, shouting, a stream of shadows. Contentedly Rogers went back to his house, ate a large meal, and addressed a little homily to the confirmation candidates in his house on the virtues of sincerity.

"What a pitiable state of mind old 'Bogus' must be in," sighed Tester, when the scurry of feet along the passage had died down into a sort of quietness, and he and Gordon were sitting in front of a typically huge School House fire.

"I don't think I should call it a mind at all," muttered Gordon, who was quite furious about the whole affair. "The man's an utter fool. When he is told the truth he won't believe it, but just stands there in the pulpit rambling on, airing his rotten opinions. Good God, and that's the sort of man who is supposed to be moulding the coming generation. Oh, it's sickening."

"Well, my good boy, what more can you expect? The really brilliant men don't take up schoolmastering; it is the worst paid profession there is. Look at it, a man with a double-first at Oxford comes down to a place like Fernhurst and sweats his guts out day and night for two hundred pounds a year. Of course, the big men try for better things. Rogers is just the sort of fool who would be a schoolmaster. He has got no brain, no intellect, he loves jawing, and nothing could be more suitable for him than the Third Form, the pulpit, and a commission in the O.T.C. But perhaps he may have a few merits. I have not found any yet."

"Nor I. But, you know, some good men take up schoolmastering."

"Oh, of course they do. There is the Chief, for instance, a brilliant scholar and *the* authority on Coleridge. But he is an exception; and besides, he did not stop an assistant master long; he got a headmastership pretty soon. Chief is a splendid fellow. But I am talking of the average man. Just look at our staff: a more fatuous set of fools I never struck. All in a groove, all worshipping the same rotten tin gods. I am always repeating myself, but I can't help it. Damn them all, I say, they've mucked up my life pretty well; not one of them has tried to help me. They just sit

round the common room fire and gas. Betteridge swears Ferrers is a wonderful man ; personally, I think he is an unmitigated nuisance. But at any rate, he is the only man who ever thinks for himself. Oh, what fools they all are."

For the rest of the evening Gordon and Tester cursed and swore at everyone and everything, and on the whole felt better for having got it off their chests. At any rate, next day Gordon was plotting a rag on an enormous scale with Archie Fletcher ; and in a House game assisted in the severe routing of Rogers' house by seventy-eight points to nil. It takes a good deal to upset a boy of fifteen for very long. And the long evenings were a supreme happiness.

It must be owned that during hall Lovelace was rather unsociable. It was not that he studied Greek or Latin ; for scholastic triumphs he had a healthy contempt. But horse-racing was the real interest of his life. " This is my work," he used to scoff, brandishing *The Sportsman* in Gordon's face. " I am not going to be a classic scholar, and I sha'n't discover any new element, or such stuff as that. I am going on the turf. This is my work."

For an hour every evening he laboured perseveringly at " his work " with form books, *The Sportsman*, and huge account books. For every single race he chose the runners, and laid imaginary bets ; and each night he made out how much he had lost or made. And it must be confessed that if he had really laid money on the horses, he would most certainly have done a good term's work. For by Christmas he was one hundred and seventeen pounds up. This pursuit, of course, rather militated against his activities in the class-room ; but, as he said, " It was only Claremont, the old Methuselah—and they had a damned good crib." Lovelace did his work from seven to eight, and during this time Caruthers, who seemed to be in the happy condition of never having any work to do at all, wandered round the studies. And during his peregrinations many who had been to him before merely units in a vast organisation

detached themselves from the rest, and became to him living characters; and especially was this so with Foster. He had played with Foster for two years in the Colts and in A-K sides, but there had never been anything in common between them; their interests had been far apart; neither stood for anything to the other. But now, when Gordon found himself frequently dropping into Foster's study for half-an-hour or so, he realised how many qualities Foster had. He was strong-willed, obstinate almost, quite regardless of tradition, in his own way slightly a rebel, and a past master in the art of deceiving masters. There are two ways of making a master look a fool: one is by introducing processions and coloured mice; the other by bowing before him, making him think you hard-working and industrious, and all the while laughing at him behind his back. Gordon preferred the former, because he had the love of battle; but Foster held to the second method, in its way just as effective, and anyone who shook a spear against authority was sure of sympathy from Gordon.

It was a great sight to see Foster absolutely bamboozle Claremont. With the greatest regularity Foster was ploughed in his con., failed to score in Latin prose, and knew nothing of his rep. And yet he never got an imposition. He would point out how hard he worked; he often stayed behind after school for a few seconds to ask Claremont a point in the unseen. Such keenness was unusual, and Claremont could not connect it with the slovenly productions that he had learnt to associate with the name of Foster. For a long time it was a vast enigma. At half term Foster's report consisted of one word, typically Claremontian—"Inscrutable." But manners always win in the end. Foster showed so much zeal, such an honest willingness to learn, that Claremont finally classed him as a hard-working, keen, friendly, but amazingly stupid boy. The Army class, which Foster honoured with his presence, always did Latin and English with Claremont, and for over two years Foster sat at the back of Claremont's room, scoring marks by singles when others scored by tens. Yet his reports were invariably good; he never

had an imposition; he never needed to prepare a line of anything.

"Well, Foster," Claremont used to say, as he returned a prose entirely besmirched with blue pencil, "I believe you really try, but the result is most disheartening."

Foster always looked profoundly distressed; and at the end of the hour he would go up, prose in hand, and ask why the subject of an active verb could not be in the ablative. Two minutes later he would emerge with a broad grin on his face, and murmur to whoever might be near that Claremont was "a most damnable ass, but none the less a pleasant creature." And in the evening hall he and Gordon would discuss how one or other of them had advanced a step further into the enemy's country, and taken one more pawn in the gigantic game of bluff. They were both in their own fashion working to the same end.

But at this point the serene calm of Gordon's life was suddenly rudely interrupted by an incursion on the part of "the Bull." About three weeks after the term had begun the Colts played their first game, and like most sides at the beginning of a season, they were terribly disorganised. Lovelace, who had been in under-sixteen teams for years, was the Senior Colts badge and was captain. Burgoyne led the scrum; he was a rough diamond, if indeed a diamond at all, and was not too popular with the side. Foster was scrum half; Collins and Gordon were in the scrum. It was really quite a decent side, but this particular afternoon it started shakily. "The Bull" raged so madly and cursed so furiously that the side became petrified with funk, and could do nothing right.

Once and only once did the Colts look like scoring, and then Lovelace knocked on the easiest pass right between the posts.

"Never did I see anything like it," bellowed Buller. "For eighteen years I have coached Fernhurst; and before that I coached Oxford and Gloucestershire; and I am not going to stand this. Lovelace, you are not fit to be captain of a pick-up, let alone a school Colts side. Burgoyne,

skipper the side. Now then, two minutes more to half-time ; do something, Colts."

The Colts did do something. They let the other side score twice. At half-time Buller poured forth a superb torrent of rhetoric. And suddenly there came over Gordon an uncontrollable desire to laugh. "The Bull" looked so funny, with his hair ruffled, and his eyes flaming with wrath. Gordon had to look the other way, or he would have burst into paroxysms of laughter. When one is over-excited and worried, hysteria is not far absent. Gordon turned away.

Then suddenly he felt a terrific assault on his backside. Someone had booted him most fiercely, and turning round he saw the face of Buller still more distorted with rage.

"Never saw such rudeness ! Here am I trying to coach the rottenest side that has ever disgraced a Fernhurst ground, and you haven't the manners to listen to me. Good man, are you so perfect that you can afford to pay no attention to me ? For heaven's sake, don't make your footer like your cricket, the slackest thing in the whole of Fernhurst. Come on, we'll go on with this game."

For ten more minutes "the Bull" watched the Colts making feverish endeavours to do anything right. But his powers of endurance were not equal to the strain.

"Here," he shouted, as Harding was going up to change after superintending a pick-up, "you might referee for about ten more minutes here, will you ? I can't bear the sight of the little slackers any longer."

A sigh of relief went up as the figure of Buller rolled out through the field gate. Strangely enough, the Colts did rather better after this, and Collins scored really rather a fine try. But the side left the field glowing with resentment. None more than Gordon and Lovelace.

"What does the fool mean by making a little ass like Burgoyne captain ? " complained Gordon. "Dirty little beast, who does not wash or shave. And he hacked me up the bottom, too, the swine. I'm getting a bit sick of 'The Bull.' "

"So am I. What we really want is my brother back again. He kept him in order all right. My brother was a

strong man, and did not stand any rot from Buller or anyone else."

"Hullo, you two, you look about fed up! What's the row?"

They turned round; Mansell was coming up behind them. Lovelace burst out perfervidly:

"It's that fool Buller. He cursed the Colts all round, and he made Burgoyne captain instead of me, and he hacked Gordon's bottom, and told him he had no manners. Believe me, we have had a jolly afternoon."

"And I suppose he said that he had captained Oxford, Cambridge, New Zealand and the Fiji Islands, and that in his whole career he had never seen anything like it," said Mansell.

"Oh yes, he fairly rolled out his qualifications, like a maid-servant applying for a post."

"Oh, well, never mind," said Mansell; "he is a good chap, really, only he can't keep his temper. He'll probably apologise to you both before the end of the day. I remember Ferguson said once: 'All men are fools and half of them are bloody fools.' Not so bad for Ferguson that! Cheer up!"

"Yes; but, damn it all, it is a bit thick," said Lovelace. "And a tick like Burgoyne to boot."

As they were changing, a fag from Buller's made a nervous entry; he looked very lost, but finally summoned up enough courage to ask Davenport if he knew where Caruthers was.

"Yonder, sirrah, lurking behind the piano."

The fag came up.

"Oh—I say—er—Caruthers. 'The Bull'—er, I mean Mr Buller wants to see you as soon as you are changed."

"Right," said Gordon.

"I said so," said Mansell; "he will weep over you and shake your hand like a long-lost brother; and after you will follow Lovelace, who will once more lead the lads with white jerseys and red dragons to victory against Osborne. Good-bye; you needn't stop, you know," he informed the fag, who was giving a stork-like performance, by gyrating first on one foot then on another.

"That means I shall miss my tea," said Gordon.

"I fear so," answered Mansell. "I don't really think you can expect 'the Bull' to receive you with crumpets and muffins and other goodly delights. Of course to-morrow is Sunday; you might manage to work a supper-party, but don't rely on it. Come and tell me the result of your chat; you will find me in my study; don't knock; just walk in; you are always welcome."

As Gordon walked across the courts to Buller's study he had not the slightest doubt as to how the interview would end. "The Bull" was often like this. Only yesterday Foster had told him some long yarn of how he had beaten a lad in Christy's and had hit his hand by mistake; and to kick a person was, after all, a far more undignified method of assault. It was almost actionable. Quite contentedly he knocked on the door and went in. He was not, however, welcomed with open arms. "The Bull" stood with his back to the door, facing the fireplace, his hands behind his back. He did not speak for a minute or so. Gordon wondered if it would be correct to take a chair. "The Bull" broke the silence.

"Well, Caruthers, are you sorry for what happened this afternoon?"

This took Gordon by surprise; it was hardly the interview he had been led to expect. He murmured "Yes" rather indistinctly.

"Are you, though? Because if you are just going to come in here and say you are sorry, when you are not, just to smooth things over, you would be a pretty rotten sort of fellow."

"Yes." Gordon had recovered his self-control and was ready for a fight.

"Well, this is the way I look at things. I am here to coach Fernhurst sides; it is my life's work. I love Fernhurst, and I have devoted all my energy and care to help my old school, and it seems to me that you are trying—you and Lovelace between you—to ruin my work and stand in my light. Both of you as individuals are well worth your places in both under-sixteen sides, football and cricket.

As individuals, I say ; and you think you are indispensable to the side, and that we can't do without you. You can afford to laugh when you miss catches, and not pay attention to me when I am trying to give you the benefits of my experience."

"I heard every word——"

"Will you kindly wait till I have finished. Fernhurst has done very well in the past without you and Lovelace, and five years hence it will have to do without you, and I am not going to have you interfere with the present. You hate me, I dare say ; from all I hear of you, you hate my house ; and you stir up sedition against me. You show the others how much you care for me. And you are both people who have some influence in your house, and wherever you are, for that matter. And are you using it for the good of Fernhurst ? You ruined all my pleasure in the cricket Colts; but I don't care about myself. All I care for is Fernhurst. Why did I stop Lovelace being captain ? Because I want a man who is going to back me up, who is going to play for the side and not for himself. And I tell you I am going to drop Lovelace ; he plays for himself ; he gives rotten passes ; he upsets combination ; and I won't have him on my side."

Gordon could stand it no longer.

"Sir, I am not going to hold a brief for myself. But you have not treated Lovelace fairly. Last year on a trial game you kicked him out of the side, only to find in a week that you could not do without him. And to-day, sir, on a trial game you deposed him from the captaincy."

"Do you mean to say that after playing Rugby football for twenty-five years I don't know what I am talking about ?"

Gordon saw he had said too much.

"And I am not talking about his play, I am talking about his general attitude. Now, didn't you two rag about a good deal at the nets last term ?"

"Well, sir, it was hardly ragging, sir——"

"Oh, hardly ragging. . . . There must be no ragging. . . . If we are going to turn out good sides we must be in dead earnest the whole time. You imagine you are loyal

to Fernhurst. My old sides followed me implicitly. I loved them, and they loved me. We worked together for Fernhurst ; now, are you doing your best for Fernhurst ? "

Gordon was overwhelmed. He wanted to tell " the Bull " how mistaken he was ; that he and Lovelace did not hate him at all ; that they were doing their best ; but that their sense of humour was at times too strong. But it was useless. " The Bull " would not give him a chance. And he had learnt from Mansell and Tester that "the Bull" could only see one point of view at a time. And yet he was filled with an immense admiration for this man who thought only of Fernhurst, who had worked for Fernhurst all his life, who made Fernhurst's interests the standard for every judgment and action. There was something essentially noble in so unswerving a devotion. If only his love of Fernhurst had not made him so complete an egoist.

" Well, what is it to be, Caruthers ? " Buller went on. " Are you going to work with me or against me ? When you first came you were keen and willing. You are still keen, but you think too much of yourself now ; you imagine you know more than I do. Is all this going to stop ? Are we going to work together ? "

There was nothing to be gained by arguing.

" Sir, I shall do my best to."

" Well, I hope so, Caruthers. It is not for my own sake I mind; you see that, don't you ? It is Fernhurst that matters. We must all do our best for Fernhurst. Well, Caruthers, I hope we sha'n't have any more trouble, because you will be a power in the school some day, and we want to work together—for Fernhurst."

" Yes, sir."

Gordon walked to the door; as he put his hand on the knob he paused for a second, then turned round.

" Good-night, sir."

" Good-night, Caruthers."

He was out in the street again. There was a tremendous noise going on in one of the Buller's studies. From the courts came sounds of barge football. He did not feel

as if he wanted to go and discuss everything with Mansell for a minute or so. Slowly he wandered round the shrubbery, past the big school, past the new buildings into the Abbey courtyard. He sat down on a seat and tried to think. A girl came and sat beside him and smiled at him invitingly. He took no notice. She sat there a minute or so, then got up and walked off stiffly. The Abbey clock boomed out the quarter to six. In a minute or so he would have to go back to tea. He was worried. He liked "the Bull," admired him intensely; and yet "the Bull" thought he hated him, thought him disloyal. Why could not Buller keep his temper? Why must he rush to conclusions without weighing the evidence? And "the Bull" was such a splendid man; he was one of the very few masters Gordon respected in the least. He wanted "the Bull" to like him. And then there was Lovelace. Why couldn't "the Bull" try and see life as Lovelace saw it? Why must he want everyone to share the same views as he did, look at everything through the same spectacles? It wouldn't have mattered if he was merely an insignificant busybody like Christy. He was such a splendid fellow, such a man. It was all a great pity. And yet he realised that he would have to try and bend his will to that of Buller; he must endeavour to work side by side with him. It would not do to have Fernhurst split up into two camps. In the past he had thought he was doing his best; but "the Bull" wanted absolute subservience. And what "the Bull" wanted he usually got.

Lovelace, however, took quite a different view. He was mad with Buller.

"Damn it all, it is not the first time the swine has done the dirty on me. Look at the way he kicked me out of the side last year," he protested.

"Yes, I know," said Gordon; "that's what I told him. And he owned that both of us as individuals were worth our place, but that we upset the side and rotted about, and were always up against him."

"Silly ass the man must be. We are keen enough, aren't we? But I damned well don't see why we should

treat footer and cricket as a sort of chapel service. We can laugh in form if anything funny happens; then why the hell shouldn't we laugh on the field? And, my God, Caruthers, you did look an ass when you missed that catch." Lovelace roared with laughter at the thought of it. "The way you juggled with it, and old Bull tearing his hair, oh, it was damned funny."

"But, you see, 'the Bull' thinks games are everything, and, damn it all, they are the things that really matter. We each may have our own private interests. But games are the thing. Only personally I don't see why we should not see the funny side of them. To 'the Bull,' of course, a dropped catch is an everlasting disgrace."

"Oh, let 'the Bull' go to blazes, I am sick of him. If he wants to kid me out of the Colts, he can; and I'll go and enjoy myself on House games. But look here, there is a Stoics debate to-night and it is just on roll-time. You had better go down and bag two seats."

As Gordon strolled down to bag seats he thought that there was a good deal to be said for Lovelace's point of view. One played games to enjoy oneself, after all. But still "the Bull" thought otherwise, and it was the interests of Fernhurst that had to be considered. Just then "the Bull" and Fernhurst seemed almost synonymous terms.

The Stoics society was one of elastic proportions, including everyone above IV. A, with a life subscription of sixpence, and during the winter term it held meetings every other week in the School House reading-room. The actual membership was over a hundred, but rarely more than fifty attended, and of those who went only fifty per cent. paid any attention to the proceedings. The rest looked on it as a good excuse for getting off work. Three quarters of the society were from the School House, and these arrived with deck-chairs, cushions and a novel, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Christy was the president, and this was to a great extent the reason for so general an atmosphere of boredom and indifference. For Christy was the typical product of conventionality and pharisaism. He was so thoroughly contented with anything he superintended that

he refused to believe any improvement was possible. But this year Betteridge was honorary secretary and had tried to infuse a little life into the society. The subject for the first debate of the term was "Classical and Modern Education," and Ferrers was going to speak for the modern side. Ferrers was always writing to the papers, and was already well known in the common room as a feverish orator. A good deal had been rumoured about him, and the school were rather anxious to hear him. There was quite a large audience. At about twenty past seven Christy came in, and everyone stood up till he had sat down. Burgess was to open the debate for the classics, and Christy was to second him. Ferrers and Fothering, the head of Claremont, were for the moderns. The debate was supposed to open at twenty past the hour. But Ferrers had not arrived. There was an awkward pause. At last Christy got up.

"I really think it is useless to wait any longer for Mr Ferrers. We will proceed. The motion before the House is: That in the opinion of this House a classical education is more efficacious than a modern one. I will call on Mr Burgess to open the motion."

There was a little clapping as Burgess got up with a customary display of conceit. He ran his hand through his hair and took a glance at his notes, and then began with the blasé air of Mercury addressing a Salvation Army meeting.

"Of course those in favour of modern education will defend themselves on the grounds of general utility. They will point out the uselessness of Greek in business; all I can say to that is that the Public School man should be too much of a gentleman to wish to succeed in business. He should aim higher; he should follow the ideals set before him by the classics. Nearly all the poets and politicians of to-day are Public School men; nearly all . . ."

He went on rolling off absurdly dogmatic statements that were based solely on ignorance and arrogance. He was of the Rogers' school of oratory. He believed that a sufficient amount of conceit and self-possession would carry anyone through. About half-way through his speech he

was interrupted by the approach of a whirlwind. There was a sound of feet on the stone passage, something crashed against the door, and in rolled Ferrers in a most untidy blue suit, a soft collar, an immense woollen waistcoat, and three books under his arm. These he slammed on the table, in company with his cap.

"Awfully sorry, Christy, old fellow . . . been kept . . . new lot of books from Methuen's . . . had to take one up to my wife . . . rather ill, you know. . . . Fire away, Burgess."

All his remarks were flung off in jerks at a terrific rate. The abashed orator concluded rather prematurely and rather wildly; such an incursion was most irregular and very perplexing.

"I will now call on Mr Ferrers to speak."

Up leapt Ferrers and began at once firing off his speech at the pace of a cinematograph. He was full of mannerisms. He would clap his hand over his eyes when he wanted to think of something, and would then spread it out straight before him. It was rather dangerous to get close. He would pick up one of his books and shake it in the face of Christy.

"This is what Mackenzie says . . . in *Sinister Street* . . . fine book . . . smashes up everything, shows the shallowness of our education . . . this is what he says. . . ."

After he had read a few words, he would bang the book down on the table and continue pouring forth inextricable anacolutha. Everyone was listening; they had never heard anything quite like this before. It was a revelation. Christy chewed his finger-nails. Burgess assumed an air of Olympian contempt. The flood of rhetoric rolled on:

"It is like this, you see; the classical education makes you imitate all the time . . . Greek Prose like Sophocles . . . Latin Verse like Petronius. . . . I don't know if I have got the names right . . . probably not . . . never could stick doing it. There is no free thought. Classic men do very well in the Foreign Offices, but they can't think. . . . What do classics do in the literary world? Nothing. Chesterton, Lloyd George, Symons, Wells—all the best men never went to a Public School. . . . We want originality; and

the classics don't give it. They are all right for a year or so to give a grounding of taste . . . though they don't give that to the average boy . . . but no more. What did I learn from classics ?—only to devise a new way of bringing a crib into form. . . . Is that an education ? No, we want French, jolly few cribs to be got of Daudet that are any use to the Lower Fifth . . . Maths, that's the stuff . . . makes them think. . . . Riders . . . get them out your own way—not Vergil's way or Socrates' way—your own way—originality. . . ."

In this strain he talked for a quarter of an hour, and held the audience spellbound. He had really interested them. Here was something new, something worth listening to. He was received with a roar of clapping.

After his speech everything else fell flat. Christy made one or two super-subtle remarks which no one understood. There was nothing left for Fothering to say ; the motion was then put before the House and the debate developed into a farce. Idiot after idiot got up and made some infantile qualification of an earlier statement—all of them talked off the point. So much so, in fact, that Turner was beginning a tale of a fight he had had with a coster down Cheap Street when Christy called him to order.

Gordon at once rose in protest.

" Gentlemen, I address the Chair. It is preposterous that Mr Turner should have been refused a hearing. We may have lost what would perhaps have thrown new light on the subject. Doubtless he had carefully selected this particular anecdote out of a life, alas, too full of excitement " (a roar greeted this, Christy had beaten Turner that very morning for eating chocolates in German), "with the express view of pointing out the superiority of the classics. Doubtless the rough in question, not knowing the custom in Homeric contests, had failed to propitiate the gods, while he, the narrator, had rushed into Back Lane behind Mother Beehive's charming old-world residence, and having offered a prayer to Mars, waited for his burly antagonist in the darkness, and as the vile man, clearly one of St Paul's 'god haters' " (that time the Sixth were reading the

"Romans") "thundered by, he smote him with a stone above the eye, and left him discomfited and, like Œdipus, well nigh blind. Here we see——"

But the meeting never found out what they really saw. Gordon was called to order, and sat down amid a tumult of applause. One or two more speakers brought fresh evidence to bear on the subject; and then there was the division. The moderns won by a huge majority. As the rabble passed into the passage Gordon heard Ferrers say to Christy in his most patronising manner:

"Ah, we rather wiped the ground with you, didn't we? . . . Well, never mind, you stood no earthly. . . . Days of the classics are over. Still, you fought well. . . . Third line of defence—*ad triarios*. . . . I remember a bit of my classics."

Gordon was borne out on the stream past the matron's room to the end of the passage, and the rest of Ferrers's speech was lost.

From this day the Stoics underwent a complete change. The whole nature of the society was altered. Ferrers was so absolutely different from anything that a master had appeared to be from time immemorial. He was essentially of the new generation, an iconoclast, a follower of Brooke and Gilbert Cannan, heedless of tradition, probing the root of everything. At the end of the term Christy resigned his presidency. He could not keep pace with the whirlwind Ferrers.

"You know, Caruthers," said Tester in second hall, "whatever our personal feelings may be, we have got to allow that this man Ferrers has got something in him."

"Something! Why, I thought him simply glorious. Here he is bursting in on the prude conventionality of Fernhurst full of new ideas, smashing up the things that have been accepted unquestionably for years. By Jove, the rest of the staff must hate him."

"There was a thing by him in the *A.M.A.* the other day that caused considerable annoyance, I believe. I didn't read the thing myself, but I heard 'the Bull' saying it was disgraceful that a Fernhurst master should be allowed to

say such things. I suppose he said something against games."

"Well, damn it all, if he did, he is in the wrong. Games are absolutely necessary. What on earth would the country be like without them?"

"A damned sight better, I should think."

"Oh, don't be an ass. Just look at the fellows who don't play games, Rudd and Co. What wrecks they are! Utterly useless. We could do perfectly well without them. Could not we now?"

At this point Betteridge strolled in very leisurely. Authority had made him a very dignified person. The days of ragging Trundle seemed very distant. He did not go about with Mansell so much now. He was more often with Carter and Harding.

"Betteridge, come in and sit down," said Tester; "we are just having an argument on the value of games. Don't you agree with me that it's about time a man like Ferrers really began to make a sensible attack on them?"

"Yes; though I doubt if Ferrers is quite the man to do it. He is such a revolutionary. He would want to smash everything at once. A gradual change is what is needed. I look at it like this. Games are all right in themselves. A man must keep himself physically fit; but games are only a means to an end. The object of all progress is to get a clear, clean-sighted race, intellectual and broad-minded. And I think physical fitness is a great help in the production of a clear, clean mind. The very clever man who is weak bodily is so apt to become a decadent; and because he himself can't stand any real exertion, despises those who can. Games are necessary as a means to an end. But Buller and all the rest of the lot think games are the actual end. Look at the way a man with his footer cap is idealised and worshipped. He may be an utter rake; probably is, most likely he has no brains at all. If he ever had them, he soon ceased to use them, and devoted all his energies to athletic success. Why should we worship him? Merely because he can kick a rotten football down a rotten field. It is this worship of athletics that is so wrong."

"Oh, you are talking rot," burst out Gordon angrily; "the English race is the finest in the whole world and has been bred on footer and cricket. I own the Public School system is rotten to the core; but not because of games. It stamps out personality, tries to make types of us all, refuses to allow us to think for ourselves. We have to read and pretend to like what our masters tell us to. No freedom. But games are all right. We all have our own interests. Poetry is my chief one at present. But that doesn't blind me to the fact that games are what count. Where should we be without them? And I damn well hope the House is not going to get into a finicky, affected state of mind, despising them because they are too slack to play them. That's why you hate them, Betteridge, because you are no good at them. My great ambition is to be captain of this House and win the Three Cock. Of course the worship of sport is all right. Our fathers worshipped it, and damned good fellows they were, too. I can't stand you when you talk like this. I am going to find Lovelace; he has got a bit of sense."

The door slammed noisily behind him.

"He is very young," said Betteridge.

"Yes; and full of hopes," murmured Tester. "It is a pity to think he will have to be so soon disillusioned. Very little remains the same for long. Pleasure is very evanescent."

Betteridge looked at him a little curiously.

"I should not have thought you would have found that out," he said.

Tester looked annoyed. He hated himself being given away; as it was, he just passed it off with a laugh.

"Oh, well, you know, even the fastest of us get tired of our licence at times. Byron would have become a Benedictine monk if he had lived to be fifty."

Betteridge smiled, and picking up a Browning from the table sank into an easy-chair to read.

Tester remained looking into the fire. What a fool he had been to give himself away just then. It was his great object never to let anyone really see into his soul. He

had once shown Caruthers what he was, because he could not bear to see a person of ability wasting himself for want of high ideals. He had tried to show him that there was something above the commonplace routine of life. And in a way he had succeeded. Caruthers often came in in the evenings to discuss poetry with him, and those were some of the happiest moments of his life. He was not sorry that he had poured out his heart to him. Of course Caruthers was still young, was still under the influence of environment. But in time he was sure to realise that athletics were not the aim of life, but only a tavern on the wayside, where we may rest for a little, or which we may pass by, just as our fancy takes us. If Caruthers saw this at last, he would then have done at least something not altogether vain.

For, after all, what a useless life his had been. The road he had travelled seemed white with the skeletons of broken hopes. In the glowing coals he saw the pageant of his past unroll itself. He had never been quite the normal person. His father was a minor poet, and for as long as he could remember his house had been full of literary people. Arthur Symons and George Moore had often discussed the relations between art and life across his fireplace. Yeats had told him stories of strange Irish myths ; Thomas Hardy had read to him once or twice. He had spent his whole life with men who thought for themselves, who had despised the conventions of their day, and he himself had ceased to believe in anything except what personal experience taught him. He had resolved to find out things for himself. And what, after all, had he discovered? Little except the vanity of mortal things. In his friendship with Stapleton he had for a term or so found a temporary peace, but it had not been for long. As soon as he achieved anything it seemed to collapse before him. He had at times sought to forget his failures in blind fits of passion, but when the fire was burnt out the old world was the old world yet! In books alone he found a lasting comfort. The school looked on him as "quite a decent chap, awfully fast, of course, doesn't care a damn what he does, just lives to enjoy himself and have a damned good

time." He smiled at the irony of it all. If they only knew! But they could never know. He had made a mistake in saying so much to Betteridge just before; he must not do it again. He must go on probing everything to discover where, if anywhere, was that complete peace, that perfect beauty that he had set out to find. In the meantime the destiny of his life would unfold itself. He would just follow where his inclinations led him.

The evening bell broke into his reverie.

He stretched himself.

"Well, come on, Betteridge. Let us have a rag to-night."

"Oh, I don't think I will, I am rather sleepy." Betteridge was aware of his position. To Tester being a prefect signified very little.

That night Carter's dormitory was submitted to a most fearful raid. Water flowed everywhere. Two sheets were ripped and a jug broken. Rudd's bed was upset on the floor with Rudd underneath.

"By Jove, Caruthers," said Lovelace, from Harding's well-behaved dormitory, "that man Tester is some lad."

And Gordon thought, as he saw him laying about him full lustily with a pillow, that all his talk about games must be merely a damned affectation. He was really just like any ordinary fellow.

When peace was at last restored, and Tester led home his victorious forces, he laughed quietly to himself, as he watched the moonlight falling across a huge pool of water. He had played his part pretty well.

For the rest of the term life flowed easily with Gordon. There were no further rows with "the Bull"; in fact their row seemed, for a time at any rate, to have brought them closer together than they had ever been before. Both seemed anxious to be friends with one another, and on the football field Gordon's play gave really very little cause for complaint. For this term his football reached its highest level. In following seasons he played good games on occasions, but he never equalled the standard he set himself in the Colts. It was one of Gordon's chief characteristics that

he usually did well while others failed, and this term the Colts for some reason or other never properly got together. The side kept on being altered. For a week after the row Lovelace was kept out of the side; but it was soon obvious that his presence was absolutely necessary.

"What did I say," said Gordon. "You see, 'the Bull's' madness doesn't last for very long. He got a bit fed up with you, Lovelace, so he made himself imagine your football was bad. He can always make himself think what he likes."

"Yes; but it is rather a nuisance," Mansell remarked, "when you realise it is always House men who have to do the Jekyll and Hyde business."

"Good Lord! Mansell, you are becoming literary," laughed Gordon. "How did you hear of Jekyll and Hyde?"

"Claremont has been reading the thing on Sunday mornings; not so bad for a fool like Stevenson. It rather reminded me of *The Doctor's Double*, by Nat Gould; only, of course, it is not half so good."

"No, that is a fact," said Lovelace. "Nat Gould is the finest author alive. I read some stuff in the paper the other day about books being true to life. Well, you could not get anything more true than *The Double Event*; and racehorsing is the most important thing in life, too. I sent up the other day for six of his books; they ought to be here to-morrow."

"Well, for God's sake, don't bring them in here," said Gordon, "there is enough mess as it is with *The Sportsmans* of the last month trailing all over the place."

"Oh, have some sense, man; you don't know what literature is."

Gordon subsided. All his new theories of art collapsed very easily before the honest Philistinism of Lovelace and Mansell; for he was not quite sure of his own views himself. He loved poetry, because it seemed to express his own emotions so adequately. Byron's Tempest-anger, Tempest-mirth was as balm to his rebellious soul. Rebellion was, in fact, at this time almost a religion with him. Only a

few days back he had discovered Byron's sweeping confession of faith, "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments," and he found it a most self-satisfying doctrine. That was what his own life should be. He would fight against these masters with their old-fashioned and puritanic notions; he would be the preacher of the new ideas. It was all very crude, very impossible, but at the back of this torrid violence lay an honest desire to better conditions, tempered, it must be owned, with an ambition to fill the middle of the stage himself. In his imagination he became a second Byron. He saw, or thought he saw, the mistakes of the system under which he lived; and—without pausing to consider its merits — wished to sweep away the whole foundation into the sea, and to build upon some illusory basis a new heaven and new earth. He had yet to read the essay in which Matthew Arnold says that "Byron shattered, inevitably shattered himself against the black rock of British Philistinism." He was at present so full of hope. The Poetry of Revolt coloured his imagination to such a degree that he saw himself standing alone and triumphant amid the wreck of the world he had overthrown. He was always protesting that Swinburne's finest line was in the *Hymn to Proserpine*:

"I neither kneel nor adore them, but standing look to the end."

It raises a wonderful picture to a young imagination: Swinburne standing on a mountain, looking across the valley of years in which man fights feverishly for little things, in which nations rise to empire for a short while, in which constitutions totter and fall, looking to where, far away behind the mountains, flickered the faint white streamers of the dawn. Oh, he was very young; very conceited too, no doubt; but is there anyone who, having lived longer, having seen many bright dreams go down, having been disillusioned, and having realised that he is but a particle in an immense machine, would not change places with Gordon, and see life once more roseflushed with impossible loyalties?

In its passage school life seems very long; in retrospect it appears but a few hours. There is such a sameness about everything. A few incidents here and there stand out clear, but, as a whole, day gives place to day without differing much from those that have gone before it. We do not realise this till we can look back on them from a distance; but it is none the less true.

In the Sixth Gordon's scholastic career took the way of all other fugitive things. It had once given promise of leading somewhere, of resulting in something, but it wanted more than ordinary perseverance to overcome the atmosphere of the deep-rooted objection to work that overhung all the proceedings in the Sixth Form room. And that perseverance Gordon lamentably lacked.

The Lower Sixth was mainly under the supervision of Mr Finnemore; and it was a daily wonder to Gordon why a person so obviously unfitted should have been entrusted with so heavy a responsibility. Finally he came to the conclusion that the last headmaster had thought that the Sixth Form would probably make less fun and take fewer liberties with him than any other form, and that when the present Chief had come he had not had the heart to remove what had almost become a school fixture. Mr Finnemore was an oldish man, getting on for sixty, and his hair was quite white. He had a long moustache, his clothes carried the odour of stale tobacco, his legs seemed hung on to his body by hooks, that every day appeared less likely to maintain the weight attached to them. He wore a continually sad smile on his face, a smile that was half self-depreciatory, as though uncertain of its right to be there. He was most mercilessly "ragged."

The day when he took exams in big school will never be forgotten. Gordon was then in V. A. The Sixth, the Army class and the Upper Fifth were all supposed to be preparing for some future paper. All three forms had, of course, nothing to do. The Chief was up in town.

At four-fifteen Finnemore was observed to be moving in his strange way across the courts. With an almost suspicious quietness the oak desks were filled.

"What are you doing to-day, Lane?" Finnemore asked the head of the school.

"I believe, sir, we are supposed to be preparing something."

"Ah, excellent; excellent, a very good opportunity for putting in some good, hard work. Excellent! Excellent!"

For about three minutes there was peace. Then Ferguson lethargically arose. He strolled up the steps to the dais, and leaning against the organ loft began to speak:

"Gentlemen, as not only the Sixth Form, but also the Army class and Upper Fifth, are gathered here this afternoon with no very ostensible reason for work, I suggest that we should hold, on a small scale, a Bacchic festival. This will, of course, be not only entertaining but also instructive. 'Life consists in knowing where to stop, and going a little further,' once said H. H. Monro. Let us follow his advice—and that of the Greeks. First, let us shove the desks against the wall and make ready for the dance."

It had all been prepared beforehand. In a few minutes several hundred books had been dropped, several ink-pots lay smashed on the floor. There was a noise of furious thunder, and at last all the desks somehow got shoved against the wall.

Finnemore was quite overwhelmed, "magnificently unprepared." He lay back nervously in his chair, fingering his moustache.

"This must now cease," he said finally.

"No, really, sir," protested Ferguson; "everything is quite all right. Mr Carter, will you oblige us by playing the piano. I myself will conduct."

The floor of the big school is made of exquisitely polished oak, and is one of the glories of Fernhurst. It was admirably suited for the dance which within five minutes was in progress. It was a noble affair. Finnemore sat back in his chair powerless, impotent; Carter hammered out false notes on a long-suffering piano. Ferguson beat time at the top of the dais, with a pen gently waving between his fingers, as gracefully as the pierrots of Aubrey Beardsley

play with feathers. Down below heavy feet pretended to dance to an impossible tune. Someone began a song, others followed suit, and before long the austere sanctity of the room was violated by the flat melodies of *Hitchy-Koo*. It was indeed an act of vandalism. But the rioters had forgotten that they were distinctly audible from without. In the Chief's absence they had thought a row out of the question.

Unfortunately, however, "the Bull's" class-room was only a few yards off. When first he heard the strains of revelling borne upwards he thought it must be the choir practising for the Christmas concert. But it did not take long for him to appreciate that such a supposition was out of the question. The noise was deafening. He could hardly hear himself talk; investigation must be made. He got up and walked out into the courts, made his way to the big school, and opening the door revealed the scene that has just been described. For a second or so he stood speechless. He felt much as Moses might have felt, if he had seen a tribe of Gentiles invading the Holy of Holies. Then his voice rang out:

"What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance?"

A sudden silence fell over the revellers, as in Poe's story of the red death when the stranger entered the room.

Buller looked round.

"My form, the Army class, will follow me."

Disconsolately his form found their books and moved out of the room, fully aware that they would shortly have to pay full price for their pleasure. Over the remainder there fell a chill feeling of uncertainty. A few spasmodic efforts were made to carry on, but the light-heartedness was gone. The laughter was forced. Finally noise subsided into whispering, and whispering into silence and the scratching of pens.

There loomed before the Sixth Form visions of a very unpleasant interview with the Chief, and their expectations were not disappointed. The whole form had to stay back on the last day and write out a Georgic. Only the Fifth got off scot-free. Macdonald was told to deal with them, but

he saw the humour of the affair too strongly to do anything but laugh.

"These supernumerary masters, you know—Finnemore, Cambridge man—can't keep order. No good at all. Can't think why the Chief took him." And then, after a pause: "I wish I had been there!"

The result of this was that for the future Finnemore was treated with a little more respect. The Sixth decided that dances did not pay, and so contented itself with less noisy but really just as aggravating amusements. For instance, Finnemore's hatred of Browning was a byword; so one day the entire form decided to learn *The Lost Leader* for repetition. For a while Finnemore bore it patiently, but when a burly chemistry specialist walked up to within two feet of him and began to bawl so loudly that his actual words were distinguishable in the School House studies, the master covered his face with his hands and murmured: "Oh, heaven spare me this infliction!"

On another occasion Betteridge walked quietly up to him handed him a Shelley, and without any warning suddenly shrieked out:

"He hath outsoared the shadow of our night."

Finnemore looked at him sadly: "My dear Betteridge," he said, "and so early in the morning!"

By many little things his life was made wretched for him. But yet he would not have chosen any other profession. He had once started life with very high hopes, but had discovered that the world is not in sympathy with men of ideas who do not prophesy smooth things. And so at an early age he found himself disappointed in all his personal aims. It seemed that he had to harbour only the simplest wish to find it denied. And then he realised that for the loss of youth there can be no compensation, and that in youth alone happiness could be found. And so he had decided to spend his life in company with high hopes and smiling faces. There were times when an immense sadness came over him, when he thought that disillusionment was waiting for so many of them and that there were few who

would "carry their looks or their truth to the grave." But on the whole he was as happy as his temperament could ever allow him, and Gordon, although in a sense he was the very antithesis of all that he admired most, found himself strangely in sympathy with his new master. One day the subject for an essay was "Conventionality," and Gordon unpacked his torrid soul in a wild abuse of all the existing governments. After he had written it, he got rather nervous about its reception, but it was returned marked $\alpha -$, and Finnemore had written at the bottom: "We all think like this when we are young; and, after all, it is good to be young."

Gordon felt that he had found someone who understood him.

Finnemore lived in two rooms over the masters' common room, which had from time immemorial been the possession of the Sixth Form tutor, and in the evenings when Gordon used to go to have his prose corrected Finnemore would often ask him to stay behind and have some coffee. Then the two would talk about poetry and art and life till the broken bell rang out its cracked imperious summons. Finnemore had once published a small book of verses, a copy of which he gave to Gordon. They had in them all the frail pathos of a wasted career; most of them were songs of spurned affection, and inside was the quotation: "*Scribere jussit amor.*"

"When I look at the book," said Finnemore to Gordon, "I can't associate myself with the author, I seem to have quite outgrown him. And as I recall the verses I say to myself, 'Poor fellow, life was hard to you,' and I wonder if he really was myself."

With him Gordon saw life from a different angle. He presented the spectacle of failure, and it rather sobered Gordon's wild enthusiasm, at times, to feel himself so close to anything so bitterly poignant. But the hour of youth's domination, even if it be but an hour, is too full of excitement and confidence to be overclouded by doubts for very long. Usually Gordon saw in him a pathetic shadow whom he patronised. He did not realise that it was what he himself might become.

Through the long tedious hours in the shadowy classroom Gordon dreamed of wonderful successes, and let others pass him by in the rush for promotion. He began to think that prizes and form lists were not worth worrying about; he said a classical education had such a narrowing effect on character. We can always produce arguments to back up an inclination if we want to. And in Finnemore there was no force to stir anyone to do what they did not want.

Only once a day was Gordon at all industrious, and that was when the Chief took the Lower and Upper Sixth Form combined in Horace and Thucydides.

For the Chief Gordon always worked; not, it is true, with any real measure of success, for he had rather got out of the habit of grinding at the classics, but at any rate with energy. And during these hours he began to perceive vaguely what a clear-sighted, unprejudiced mind the Chief had. To the boy in the Fourth and Fifth forms any headmaster must appear not so much a living person as the emblem of authority, the final dispenser of justice, the hard, analytical sifter of evidence, "coldly sublime, intolerably just." Gordon had always before looked on the Chief as a figurehead, who at times would unbend most surprisingly and become a man. On the cricket field, when in a masters' match he had fielded cleanly a terrific cut at point, and played a most sporting innings, at House suppers, and, most surprisingly of all, when a row was on, Gordon had been unable to understand him. He could not dissociate him from his conception of a headmaster—a sort of Mercury, a divine emissary of the gods, sent as a necessary infliction. Yet at times the Chief was intensely human, and when Gordon came under his immediate influence and caught a glimpse of his methods, he saw in a flash that at all times his headmaster was a generous, sympathetic nature, and that it was his own distorted view that had ever made him think otherwise. The Chief was so ready to appreciate a joke, so quick with an answer, so unassuming, so utterly the antithesis of any master he had met before.

There were one or two incidents that stood out clearer than any others in Gordon's memories of his Chief.

At the very beginning of the term, before a start had been made on the term's work, the Chief was talking about Horace's life and characteristics.

"Now, Tester," he said, "if you were asked to sum up Horace's outlook on life in a single phrase, what would you say ? "

Tester thought for a minute or so.

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," he hazarded.

The form laughed. It seemed rather a daring generalisation. But the Chief's answer came back pat :

"Well, hardly that, Tester. Shall we say, Let us eat and drink, but not too much, or we shall have a stomach-ache to-morrow ? "

He had taken Tester's quite erroneous estimate as a basis, and yet had exactly hit off Horace's character.

But the following incident more than any other brought home to Gordon how extraordinarily broadminded the Chief was. Carter was construing, and had made a most preposterous howler, it does not matter what. He had learnt the translation in the notes by heart, and quite failed to connect it verbatim with the Greek.

"There now, you see," said the Chief, "how utterly absurd you are. You have not taken the trouble to look the words up in a dictionary. Just because you see what you think is a literal translation in the notes. There lies the fatal error of using cribs. Of course when I catch a boy in Shell or IV. A using one, I drop on him not only for slackness but dishonesty. The boy probably does not trouble to think about it, but he is taking an unfair advantage of the rest and getting promotion undeservedly. But in the Sixth Form you have got beyond that stage. We don't worry much about marks here, so there is nothing immoral in using a crib. It is merely so silly. It tends to slack translation which in the end ruins scholarship. And by using the notes as you do, Carter, you are doing just the same thing. You really must use more common-sense. Go on, please, Harding."

Gordon was amazed at such a broadminded view of cribbing. He had long since grown weary of preachers who talked about dishonesty, without seeming to draw a line between active dishonesty and passive slackness. The Chief realised that it was deliberate slackness that led to dishonesty, not dishonesty that was incidentally slack. The Chief must be a very wise man.

Nevertheless his admiration of the Chief did not make him do any more work than was strictly necessary; and Gordon began to drift into a peaceful academic groove, where he did just enough work to pass unnoticed—neither good nor bad. He had grown tired of ragging. It was such an effort, especially when the call of football was prodigal of every ounce of energy. To drift down-stream may spell mediocrity, but it also spells security, and, after all, there was little danger of Gordon becoming a mediocrity in other branches of school life. He was far too ambitious for that, but his ambitions were not academic. House politics and athletics were sufficient burdens for one man in one lifetime. "Other heights in other lives"; and Gordon believed in doing a few things well.

It was more than lucky for Gordon's future that this term he found himself a success on the football field. If he had not, he would probably have sought a prominent position in the eyes of the school by more doubtful paths; but as it was there was no need for him to plunge into wild escapades to get noticed. His football attracted quite enough attention. People spoke of his chances of getting into the Fifteen next year. The Milton match was his greatest triumph, mainly because the rest of the side did badly. Lovelace played back and made one or two fine runs when he got the ball, but as a whole the side played very half-heartedly. Burgoyne was quite off colour, and Collins's excuse that he had been overworking lately did not save him from being kicked out of the side after the match. But Gordon, who had got his Colts' badge on the morning of the match, and so was relieved of any anxieties about his place, played what he always said was his best game; so much so, in fact, that Buller, after the match, said:

"Rotten, absolutely rotten, with the exception of Caruthers, who played magnificently."

There was only one blot on his performance, and that, though everyone laughed about it, caused Gordon some regretful moments afterwards. Rightly or wrongly Gordon thought the opposite scrum half was not putting the ball in straight. Gordon told him what he thought of him. The scrum half called him "a bloody interfering ——," and told him to go to hell. The next time the scrum half got the ball Gordon flung him with unnecessary force, when he was already in touch, right into the ropes. And from then onwards the relations between Gordon and the scrum half were those of a scrapping match. Gordon came off best. He got a bruise on the left thigh, but no one could notice that, while his opponent had a bleeding nose and a cut lip. The school was amused, but Gordon overheard a Milton man say: "Well, I don't think much of the way these Fernhurst men play the game. Look at that tick of a forward there. Dirty swine!"

After the game Gordon apologised to the half, and they both passed the usual compliments; but he could see that the rest of the Milton side were not at all pleased.

He spoke to Mansell about it.

"My dear man, don't you worry. You played a jolly fine game this afternoon, and if you go on like that you are a cert. for your Firsts next year. You played a damned hard game."

"Yes; but it is rather a bad thing for the school, isn't it, if we get a reputation for playing rough?"

"But you weren't playing foul, and Buller always tells us to go hard and play as rough as we like."

"Yes; but still——"

He was not quite reassured, though everyone told him it was all right. However, if "the Bull" made no comment, it looked as if nothing could be wrong. As a matter of fact, "the Bull" had not noticed; and though Christy, in a fit of righteous indignation, poured out a long story to him, he only smiled.

"Oh, well, I expect he got a bit excited. First time he

had played footer for a school side. . . . I was a bit fierce my first game for England. Don't blame him. He's a keen kid, and I am sure the other side did not mind."

Christy mumbled indistinctly. No one ever seemed to take much notice of what he said. That evening, however, he and Rogers, over a glass of port, agreed that Caruthers was a thoroughly objectionable young fellow who ought to be taken in hand, and with this Christian sentiment to inspire him Rogers went home to put a few finishing touches to his sermon for the next day.

CHAPTER II

CARNIVAL

THE tradition of Pack Monday Fair at Fernhurst was almost as old as the School House studies. The legend, whether authenticated or not only Macdonald, the historian of Fernhurst, could say, was handed down from generation to generation. It was believed that, when the building of the Abbey was finished, all the masons, glass-workers and artificers packed up their tools and paraded the town with music and song, celebrating the glory of their accomplished work. And from time immemorial the townspeople had celebrated the second Monday in October by assembling outside the Abbey at midnight, and ushering in a day of marketing and revelry by a procession through the town, beating tin cans and blowing upon posthorns. With the exception of this ritual, the day had become merely an ordinary fair. But there was no sleeping on that Sunday night, and for the whole week tantalising sounds of shrieking merry-go-rounds, of whistling tramcars and thundering switchbacks were borne across the night to disturb those who were trying to work in hall. It used to be the custom for all the bloods to creep out at night and take part in the revels; but when the new Chief had come, four years before, he put a firm hand upon all such abuses, and had even threatened to expel anyone he found in the act, a threat which he had carried out promptly by expelling the best half-back in the school a fortnight before the Dulbridge match. And so now only a few daring spirits stole out in the small hours of the night on the hazardous expedition, and those courageous souls were the objects of the deepest veneration among the smaller boys, who would whisper quietly of their doings in the upper dormitories when

darkness lent a general security to the secrets that were being revealed.

This term about three days before Pack Monday, Gordon, Mansell, Carter and a few others were engaged in their favourite hobby of shipping Rudd's study. One chair had already gone the way of all old wood, and the table was in danger of following it, when Rudd suddenly burst out :

" Oh, you think yourselves damned fine fellows, six of you against one ! "

A roar of laughter went up. It was the traditional complaint of all weaklings in school stories, and was singularly of the preparatory school type of defence.

" Jolly brave, aren't you ? I'd like to see any one of you do anything that might get you into trouble. I don't mind betting there's not one of you that would dare to come out with me to the fair next Monday."

There was an awkward pause. The challenge was so unconventional ; and the Public School boy is not brought up to expect surprises. The only thing to do was to pass it off with a joke.

Lovelace stepped into the breach.

" Do you think any of us would go anywhere with a swine like you who does not wash ? Dirty hog ! "

" Oh, of course you would not ; you are afraid."

And then Gordon's hatred of taking the second place, which had before led him into difficulties, once again asserted itself. " Damn it all," he thought, " I am not going to be beaten by Rudd ! "

" Do you say we are all funks if we don't go ? "

" Yes ! "

" All right then, damn you, I will go with you, just to show you that you are not the only person in this rotten school who's fool enough to risk being bunked."

Rudd was rather taken aback. He had made the challenge merely out of bravado. He had regretted it instantly. In the same spirit Gordon had accepted the challenge ; he also wished he had not the moment afterwards. But both saw that they would have to go through with it now.

" Good man," said Rudd, not to be outdone. " I wanted

someone to go with me; rather lonely these little excursions without company."

He spoke with the air of one who spent every other night giving dinner-parties at the Eversham Tap.

"Look here, you two," broke in Mansell, "don't make bloody fools of yourselves. You will only get the sack if you are caught, and you probably will get caught; you are sure to do something silly. For God's sake, don't go. It's not worth it. Really, it is not!"

"Oh, shut up; don't panic," was Gordon's scornful answer; "we are going to have a jolly fine time, aren't we, Rudd?"

"Oh, splendid," said Rudd, who wanted to laugh; the whole situation was fraught with such a perfectly impossible irony.

"Oh, do have some sense, man." Lovelace was impatient with him. "What is the use of rushing about at midnight in slouch hats with a lot of silly, shrieking girls?"

"You can't understand, you live in the country. I am a Londoner. You want the true Cockney spirit that goes rolling drunk on Hampstead Heath on Easter Monday."

"Well, thank God, I do want it, then," said Lovelace.

Rumour flies round a house quickly. In hall several people came up and asked Gordon if it was true. They looked at him curiously with an expression in which surprise and admiration were curiously blended. The old love of notoriety swept over Gordon once more; he felt frightfully bucked with himself. What a devil of a fellow he was, to be sure. He went round the studies in hall, proclaiming his audacity.

"I say, look here, old chap, you needn't tell anyone, but I am going out to Pack Monday Fair; it will be some rag!"

The sensation he caused was highly gratifying. By prayers all his friends and most of his acquaintances knew of it. Of course they would keep it secret. But Gordon knew well that by break next day it would be round the outhouses, and he looked forward to the number of questions he would get asked. To be the hero of an impending escapade was pleasant enough.

"I say, Davenport," he said in his dormitory that evening, "I am going out to the fair on Monday."

Davenport said nothing, and showed no sign of surprise. Gordon was disappointed.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he said at last.

"That you are a sillier ass than I thought you were," said Davenport.

And as Gordon lay thinking over everything in the dark, he came to the conclusion that Davenport was not so very far wrong after all.

Cold and nervous, Gordon waited for Rudd in the dark boot-hole under the Chief's study on Pack Monday night just before twelve. In stockinged feet he had crept downstairs, opened the creaking door without making any appreciable noise, and then waited in the boot-room, which was filled with the odour of blacking and damp decay. There was a small window at the end of it, through which it was just possible to squeeze out on to the Chief's front lawn. After that all was easy; anyone could clamber over the wall by the V. A green.

There was the sound of feet on the stairs. It seemed to Gordon as if they were bound to wake the whole house. Rudd's figure was for a second framed black in the doorway.

Silently they wormed their way through the window. The damp soil of a flower bed was cold under their feet; with his hand Rudd smoothed out the footprints.

They stole down the silent cloisters. Shadows came by leering at them; echoes were waked as from an infinite distance. The wall of the V. A green rose dark and sinister. At last breathless among the tombstones by the Abbey they slipped on their boots, turned up coat collars and drew their caps over their eyes.

A minute later the glaring lights of the booths in Cheap Street engulfed them. They were jostled in the crowd. It was, after all, only Hampstead Heath on a small scale.

"Walk up, walk up! All the fun of the fair! Buy a teazer! Buy a teazer! Buy a teazer! Tickle the girls!

Walk up! Try your luck at the darts, sir; now then, sir, come on!"

The confused roar was as music to Gordon's soul. He had the Cockney love of a fair. The children of London are still true to the coster legends of the Old Kent Road.

Gordon and Rudd did not stop long in Cheap Street. The real business was in the fair fields by Rogers's house. This was only the outskirts.

The next hour passed in a dream. Lights flared, rifles snapped at fugitive ping-pong balls leaping on cascades of water, swing-boats rose heavenwards, merry-go-rounds banged out rag-time choruses. Gordon let himself go. He and Rudd tried everything. After wasting half-a-crown on the cocoanuts, Rudd captured first go at the darts a wonderful vase decorated with the gilt legend, "A Present from Fernhurst," and Gordon at the rifle range won a beautiful china shepherdess which held for days the admiration of the School House, until pining perhaps for its lover, which by no outlay of darts could Gordon secure, it became dislodged from the bracket and fell in pieces on the floor, to be swept away by Arthur, the school *custos*, into the perpetual darkness of the dustbin.

Weary at last, the pair sought the shelter of a small café, where they luxuriously sipped lemonade. Faces arose out of the night, passed by and faded out again. The sky was red with pleasure, the noise and shrieks grew louder and more insistent. There was a dance going on.

"I say, Rudd, do you dance?"

"No, not much."

"Well, look here, I can, a bit; at any rate I am going to have a bit of fun over there. Let us go on our own for a bit. Meet me here at a quarter to four."

"Right," said Rudd, and continued sipping the lurid poison that called itself American cream soda, and was in reality merely a cheap illness.

Gordon walked in the direction of the dancing. The grass had been cut quite short in a circle, and to the time of a broken band the town dandies were whirling round, flushed with excitement and the close proximity of a female

form. "The Mænads and the Bassarids," murmured Gordon to himself, and cursed his luck for not knowing any of the girls. Disconsolately he wandered across to the Bijou Theatre, a tumble-down hut where a huge crowd was jostling and shouting.

He ran into something and half apologised.

"Oh, don't mind me," a high-pitched voice shrieked excitedly.

He turned round and saw the flushed face of a girl of about nineteen looking up at him. She was alone.

"I say," Gordon muttered nervously, "you look a bit lonely, come and have some ginger beer."

"Orl right. I don't mind. Give us your arm!"

They rolled off to a neighbouring stall, where Gordon stood his Juliet countless lemonades and chocolates. He felt very brave and grown-up, and thought contemptuously of Davenport in bed dreaming some fatuous dream, while he was engulfed in noise and colour. This was life. From the stall the two wandered to the swing-boats, and towering high above the tawdry glitter of the revel saw through the red mist the Abbey, austere and still, the School House dormitories stretching silent with suspended life, the class-rooms peopled with ghosts.

A plank jarred under the boat.

"Garn, surely it ain't time to stop yet," wailed Emmie.

He had gathered enough courage to ask her her name.

"Have another?" pleaded Gordon.

"No; let us try the lively thing over there. These boats do make me feel so funny-like."

The merry-go-round was just stopping. There was a rush for the horses. Gordon leapt on one, and leaning down caught Emmie up and sat her in front of him; she lay back in his arms in a languor of satisfied excitement. Her hair blew across his face, stifling him; all round couples were hugging and squeezing. The sensuous whirl of the machine was acting as a narcotic, numbing thought. He caught her flushed, tired face in his hands and kissed her wildly, beside himself with the excitement of the moment.

"You don't mind, do you?" he murmured in a hoarse whisper.

"Don't be so silly; I have been waiting for that. Now we can get comfy-like."

Her arms were round his neck, her flushed face was hot on his, her hair hung over his shoulders. The strains of *You Made Me Love You* came inarticulate with passion out of the shrieking organ. Her elbow nudged him. Her lips were as fire beneath his. The machine slowed down and stopped. Gordon paid for five extra rounds. Dazed with new and hitherto unrealised sensations, Gordon forgot everything but the strange warm thing nestling in his arms; and he abandoned himself to the passion of the moment.

At last their time was up. Closely, her hair on his shoulder, they moved to the dancing circle, and plunged into the throng of the shouting, jostling dancers. Of the next two hours Gordon could remember nothing. He had vague recollections of streaming hair, of warm hands, and of fierce, wild kisses. Lights flickered, shot skywards, and went out. Forms loomed before him, a strange weariness came over him, he remembered flinging himself beside her in the grass and burying his face in her hair. She seemed to speak as from a very long way off. Once more the dance caught them. Then *Auld Lang Syne* had struck up. Hands were clasped, a circle swayed riotously. There were promises to meet next night, promises that neither meant to keep. Rudd was waiting impatiently at the café. Once more the wall by the Abbey rose spectral, once more the cloisters echoed vaguely. The boot-hole window creaked.

As the dawn broke tempestuously in the sky Gordon fell across his bed, his brain tired with a thousand memories, all fugitive, all vague, all exquisitely unsubstantial.

With heavy, tired eyes Gordon ran down to breakfast a second before time. He felt utterly weary, exhausted, incapable of effort. People came up and asked him in whispers if everything had turned out well. He answered absentmindedly, incoherently.

"I don't believe you went there at all," a voice jeered.

Gordon did not reply. He merely put his hand in his pocket and pulled out the china shepherdess that he was about to place on the rickety study bracket.

Doubt was silenced.

The long hours of morning school passed by on leaden feet; he seemed unable to answer any question right; even the Chief was annoyed.

Rain fell in torrents. The Colts game was scratched.

On a pile of cushions laid on the floor Gordon slept away the whole afternoon. From four to six he had to write a Greek Prose in his study. The tea bell scattered his dreams. He rose languidly, with the unpleasant sensation of work unfinished.

The row of faces at tea seemed to frighten him. He felt as if he had awakened out of a nightmare, that still held on to him with cold, clammy hands, and was trying to draw him back once more into its web. Visions rose before him of shrieking showmen's booths, blinking with tawdry yellow eyes. Emmie's hoarse laugh grated on his ears; he was overwrought and wanted to shout, to shriek, to give some vent to his feelings. But he seemed chained to the long bench, and his tongue was tied so that he could only mouth out silly platitudes about the weather and the Fifteen's chances.

On his way back to the studies he felt an arm laid in his. He shivered and turned round, half expecting to see Emmie's flushed, excited face peering up at him. He almost sighed with relief when he found it was Tester.

"Look here, just come for a stroll round the courts. The rain's stopped. I want to talk to you."

They wandered out under the lindens.

"I suppose you did go out last night, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, what on earth did you do it for?"

"I am sick of the whole affair," Gordon said petulantly. "Rudd called the lot of us funks, so——"

"I know that tale quite well," Tester broke in. "I have heard all about it. I want to know why you went

out. At least I don't mean that. I mean to tell you why you went out, because I don't think you know yourself. Look here, Caruthers, you have made an awful fool of yourself. You have run the risk of getting sacked, merely because you wanted to be talked about."

"I didn't. I went because I was jolly well not going to have Rudd calling me a funk."

"Comes to the same thing in the end, doesn't it? You did not want to play second fiddle; you didn't want Rudd to appear to have scored. You wanted to be the central figure. Much the same, isn't it? The love of notoriety."

Gordon murmured something inaudible.

"And it is all so damned silly. You are running the risk of getting the sack, and for nothing at all. Really, I can understand quite well anyone being drawn into anything dangerous by a strong emotion or feeling. It is natural. Masters say we should curb our natures. I don't know if they are right. That's neither here nor there. There was nothing natural in what you did. It was merely rotten imbecility —your self-consciousness, your fear of not seeming to have done the right thing. Look here, Caruthers, you can't go on like this. I own that this term you have been more or less sane. The last two terms I have often wondered what was going to happen to you. You had no balance; you kept on doing silly little things so as to hold the attention of a more stupid audience. This term you have stopped that sort of rot. But what is the use of it going to be, if you go and do things like this on the impulse of the moment, merely because you don't want to look silly? My good man, you can't think how much more silly you look by playing the ruddy ass during the small hours inside a stinking booth! You can't afford to do that sort of thing. Your ambition is to be captain of the House, and not a bad ambition either. But do you realise that if you are going to be a real power in the House, if you are going to fight the masters, as you say you will, you can't afford to fling away points? You must appear impregnable. Don't be an ass. A master holds all the high cards. If you play into his hand, he has you done to the world. Suppose you

were caught going out at night your last year, what would happen? You might get the sack at once; and all your rebellion would be wasted. And, mark you, a rebellion is wanted. There is real need of a man who has the strength of his opinions and sticks out. What's the use of it if you go and get sacked? Of course, they might keep you on, and ask you to go at the end of the term to save your face. What would your position be then? You would be bound hand and foot, powerless to do anything. Life would slip past you. You have got to be above suspicion. Think, however much you may want to do a thing now, however much praise you may think an action of yours would get, stop and consider how it will appear two years hence. A really serious row might knock you out for the rest of your time here: a bad name sticks. Remember that. Think of the day when you are going to be a real power, and stand up for the independence of the individual to think as he likes, not as Buller likes; for the independence of the House to run itself. 'The Bull' runs our house to-day. You hear men say, 'We can't do that, Buller would be sick!' You have to free them of Buller's tyranny, if you are going to be a man; and if you do, you can't fight in rusty armour. These masters may be fools, but they have the cards."

Gordon listened to Tester's flow of words. He was furious, and sat back in his chair fuming, and cursing most of hall. But when at last lights were put out and he lay back in bed and watched the stars steadfast in love and splendour, and the moon immutable, enigmatic, smiling quietly, he appreciated the truth of Tester's argument. A great battle was before him; he would have to go into it strong and prepared at every point. There must be no chink in his coat of mail.

Some day his hour would come; till then he had to wait in patience, and during the long vigil he would keep his shield clean of rust and his armour a flaming fire. He would have to think, to weigh his decision, to keep before his eyes the goal towards which his ambition was set.

CHAPTER III

BROADENING OUTLOOK

LIKE a huge reel of thread the long winter term unrolled itself. November drifted by with its gusty winds that shrieked in the empty cloisters. December came with its dark mornings and steadily falling rains. The First Fifteen matches were over. Dulbridge and Tonford had both been beaten handsomely; Mansell had got his Firsts. The Colts drew at Limborne, and finished their season with an overwhelming victory over Weybridge. House games began again, and the Thirds and Two Cock became the only possible topics of conversation. During the first half of the term Hazelton, as was inevitable, had had to spend nearly all his time in First Fifteen puntabouts and upper ground games. The House had seen little of him. But now, with all the big matches over, and only the old Fernhurstians' match to come on the last Saturday of the term, he had time to devote all his energies to the training of house sides. If he had not talked so much he would have been one of the strong, silent Englishmen. For to all outward appearances he was taciturn, unimaginative, self-willed. But he had a very nasty tongue, and never hesitated to use it at the expense of his enemies. As a house captain he was a distinct success. He knew the game well, and was able to inspire a keenness that was not jingoistic. He also had the rare virtue of knowing where to stop. He never made sides play on till they were speechless with fatigue, as some over-enthusiastic house captains had been known to do. He was very popular with his sides.

Every evening before hall there congregated in Gordon's study all the old faces of his first year, with one or two new ones. Nowhere so easily as at a Public School does one

find oneself drifting apart from an old acquaintance; not for any real reason, not for any quarrel, but merely because circumstances seem to will it so. But when the thought of House matches returned, the old lot came back together to fight their battles over again, and to dream of the silver cups glittering below the statue of Edward VI. They were all there: Hunter, who had seemed to pass almost out of Gordon's life since he had begun to play in the Fifteen; Mansell, who now spent much of his time with Hazelton; Betteridge, who was more often than not with Harding. No. 1 Study was very convenient. Roll was held just outside, and when the prefect's voice was heard calling the first name the door would be flung open, and still reclining in arm-chairs they shouted out the immemorial "sum." About five minutes before the hour of roll-call juniors from the day-room and the farther studies would begin to collect round the hot pipes in the passage, fearful of being late. Then in No. 1 Lovelace would wind up the gramophone, and the strains of *When the Midnight Choo-choo leaves for Alabama* broke out with deafening and unmusical violence. The concert lasted till the first strokes of the hour had boomed out. Roll over, they all separated to their various studies. Lovelace took out his *Sportsman* and began to total up his winnings; Gordon either lay full length in the hammock, a new and much envied acquisition which was slung across from door to window, and read for the hundredth time the haunting melodies of *Rococo*, or else, as was more usual, wandered round the studies with the magnificent air of indifference that marked all members of the Sixth.

Then came prayers; after which Gordon and Davenport made for the seclusion of their double dormitory. Lights were out at nine-fifteen for the big upper dormitories, and till then they used to wander down the passage for the ostensible reason of getting hot water, but in reality to watch, with the superior air of Olympians, the life of lesser breeds. They imagined themselves great bloods during these few minutes after prayers. Sometimes when the House tutor was supposed to be out they would join

in a game of football in the passage; but as they were caught once and each got a Georgic, this pastime lost its charm. Usually they lolled in the doorway with a perfect superiority, and talked of the old "rags" and discomfitures of two years back, for the benefit of admiring listeners.

"Do you remember when Mansell slept in that bed?" Gordon would say.

"No; I was not here that term," Davenport would reply; "but I sha'n't forget when the Chief found Betteridge's bed pitched on the floor, with Betteridge underneath and Lovelace sitting on top."

Was it possible, thought some small fry, that the great Mansell, who played for the Fifteen, had once actually slept in the same bed as he occupied now? Had Betteridge, who had only that night given half the day-room a hundred lines, once had his bed shipped on that very floor! It all seemed like a gigantic fairy story. And to think that Caruthers had seen these things!

But they were not long, these moments of the assumption of the godhead. Darkness soon fell on the long passage, and only whispered talking sounded faint and far away. Gordon and Davenport then went back to their room, and on evenings after a hard game they had a small supper. They had managed to discover a loose board, and the floor space caused by its removal served as a cupboard, a cupboard so damp and unhealthy that the most lenient sanitary inspector must infallibly have condemned it. Here, just before afternoon school, they secreted ginger beer bottles, a loaf of bread, butter, some tomatoes and a chunk of Gorgonzola cheese. In the morning they carried away the bottles in their pockets. It would have been much easier and much more comfortable to have had a meal in their study, but then it would have lacked the savour of romance. The rule forbidding the importation of food into the dormitories was very strict. At the end of the term, when both were going to leave that particular room, they nailed down the board, so that no other marauder should imitate them. They wished to be unique. But before they did so, they put in the mouldy cupboard a

lemonade bottle and one of the blue Fernhurst roll-books for the Michaelmas Term, 1913. They underlined their names in it, and left it as a memento of a few happy evenings.

"I wonder," said Caruthers, "if years hence someone will pull up that board and find the book, and seeing our names will wonder who we were."

"Perhaps," said Davenport. "And, you know, they may try and find out something about us in back numbers of *The Fernhurstian*, or in the photographs of house sides. Do you think they will be able to find out anything about us?"

"I hope so; but how little we know even of the bloods about 1905, and round there! And as likely as not we sha'n't ever be bloods. It will be rather funny if some day it should happen that of all the things we have done nothing remains but the blue roll-book."

"Funny?" said Davenport. "Rather pathetic, I should say."

At fifteen one is apt to be sentimental.

Perhaps some rude fingers have already torn up that board; perhaps even now some new generation of Fernhurstians is using it as a receptacle for tobacco, or cheese, or any other commodity contraband to the dormitories. But perhaps underneath a board in No. 1 double dormitory there still repose that identical lemonade bottle and the roll-book with its blue cover, now sadly faded and its leaves turned up with age, to serve as Gordon's epitaph, when all his other deeds have perished in oblivion.

There is perhaps nothing that has made so many friendships as a big row, or the prospect of one. We always feel in sympathy with people whose aims are identical with our own, and the principals in some big row or some big escapade cannot help being bound close together by common ties. A mutual danger has brought together many ill-assorted pairs, and among others it showed Gordon and Rudd that they had something in common with one another. Gordon had always looked upon Rudd as a "perfectly

guileless ass," who was no good at games, did nothing for the House, and was only useful as the universal provider of cribs. But after the Pack Monday Fair incident Gordon saw that there was in Rudd a something which, if not exactly to be admired, came very near it. It was a daring thing to challenge anyone who was willing to come to the fair with him, and he had not shown the slightest wish to back out of his agreement. Gordon decided to make his better acquaintance, and in the process was brought face to face with another fresh character, a type that was to set before him different aims and standards. For Gordon was sharp enough to see more or less below the surface. Rudd was quite a new type to him. It was clear that he had some merits, especially pluck ; and yet he was no good at games, and, what was more extraordinary, did not seem in the least worried about his failures. Gordon had always pitied those who could not scrape into the Thirds.

" Poor devils ! " he used to say in the arrogance of his own self-satisfaction. " I expect they tried just as much as we did. And it must be pretty awful for them to realise that they are no real use at games at all."

He had never thought it possible that anyone with the slightest claims to respectability should be quite indifferent to athletic success. But Rudd was, after all, a presentable fellow, and yet he did not mind in the least.

It was all very strange.

Only by trying to see the points of view of others do we get any real idea of the trend of human thought. It is quite useless to start life with fixed standards, and try to bring everyone to realise their virtues. We must have some standard, it is true, or we should be as rudderless boats ; but it is of paramount importance that our standards should be sufficiently elastic to include new movements ; and not until we have tried and weighed in the balance, and considered and sifted the philosophies of others, should we attempt to form a philosophy for ourselves.

By nature Gordon was arrogant and self-satisfied ; but by meeting types different from himself and in their company gaining glimpses of goals other than his own, his

character was undoubtedly broadened, his horizon extended, and he managed to get things into better proportion.

For several people just at this time were influencing Gordon. But none more so than Ferrers. Ever since the Stoics debate Gordon had become a profound admirer of the new master, who had banged into the cloistered Fernhurst life, bubbling over with the ideas of the rising generation, intolerant of prejudice and tradition, clamorous for reform. It was a great sight to see him walking about the courts. He was nearly always dressed the same, in his blue woollen waistcoat, soft collar and serge suit. He never walked anywhere without at least two books under his arm. He was recognisable at once. If a stranger had glanced round the courts in break, and had been asked afterwards if any of the masters had attracted his attention at all, he might perhaps have mentioned "the Bull's" splendid, powerful roll; with a smile he might have remarked on the prelatical Rogers, stalking like Buckingham "half in heaven." There were six or seven he *might* have noticed, but there was only one person whom he must have seen, whom he could not possibly have failed to pick out immediately, and that was Ferrers. Personality was written on every feature of his face, every movement was typical of youthful vigour and action. His half-contemptuous swing suggested a complete scorn of everything known before 1912. He was the great god of Gordon's soul, greater even than Lovelace major had been, far greater than Meredith.

As he sat listening to Finnemore discussing artistic questions in form, he felt wildly impatient to hear Ferrers's opinion. Nothing seemed settled definitely until Ferrers had spoken, and only the Army and Matriculation classes had the tremendous advantages of doing English with him. Most of Ferrers's time was wasted in attempts to drive home mathematical theories into the dense brain of a lower school set.

As to his influence in the school there could be no two opinions. The bloods, of course, were too completely settled in their grooves of Philistinism and self-worship to feel the force of innovation. But even on a mild character

like Foster's his effect was startling. Ferrers's great theory was: "Let boys take their own time. The adage that it does a boy good to do what he hates may be all right for classics, but it is no good to try that game with literature. Find out what a boy likes. Encourage him, show you are in sympathy with his taste, and once in his confidence gradually lead him step by step to the real stuff. He will follow you, if you only make out you like what he likes. A boy hates the superior attitude of 'Oh, quite good in its way, of course.' A master must get to the boy's level; it is fatuous to try and drag the boy to his at once." And there is abundant proof to show that this plan was a success. When Ferrers first came, Foster, for example, read nothing but Kipling and Guy Boothby. During his last term Gordon found him absorbed in *Vanity Fair* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. It would be difficult to over-estimate the good Ferrers did at Fernhurst. From afar Gordon worshipped him. He learnt from Foster what Ferrers had read to his form and what he recommended them to read, and as soon as he could he would go and buy the book. The school book-shop about this time began to find in Gordon its most generous patron. At times Gordon would tell Foster to ask Ferrers questions that interested him. And the answers, usually a little vague and elastic, spurred Gordon on to fresh fields. His taste was beginning to grow, and football "shop" was no longer his only topic of conversation.

CHAPTER IV

THIRDS

THERE was only one thing that at all worried Gordon just now, and that was the behaviour of the Hazlitt brethren. Mention has already been made of this couple. During their first few terms they gave every promise of developing into the very worst types that banality and athletic success can produce, and these expectations had been abundantly fulfilled. The elder brother had his points, but they were few, the chief one being that he was fairly good at games, which, after all, is but a negative quality. But the younger, who was as useless as he was generally officious, was entirely devoid of any redeeming feature. His ways were the ways of a slum child playing in the gutter, and his sense of humour was limited to shouting rude remarks after other people, knocking off hats, and then running away. His language was foul enough to disgust even a Public School's taste. Gordon loathed him. One evening he and Lovelace discussed the child.

"Look here," said Gordon, "it's no good, this. That unutterable little tick Hazlitt knocked off my hat as I was looking at the notice-board to-day, and I am not going to stand it. By the time I had turned round he was half-way across the courts."

"The little swine! He is not fit to be in a decent school. If he can't get rid of the habits he learnt with street cads in the holidays of his own accord, he'll have to be kicked out of them. We will wait for him one day, and if we see him knock a School House straw off, my God, we will boot him to blazes!"

"Right you are. It won't be bullying. It will be treating a dirty beast in the only way he can understand."

About three days later, from their study window, they saw Hazlitt minor proceeding to the notice-board after lunch. They left their study and walked into the cloisters.

Hazlitt minor read the notices, discovered that, as he was posted on no game, he must of necessity take himself to the "pick-up," and then looked round. Davenham was conscientiously perusing a notice, although there was no likelihood of his own name appearing on any. (It is almost true to say that nobody looked at the board except the people about whom there are no notices to read.) There was an announcement four days old to the effect that C. J. Mansell had been presented with his First Fifteen colours. Davenham seemed to find it vastly interesting. Hazlitt stole up behind, and knocked his hat flying across the cloister. In a second Gordon and Lovelace were on him. They did not care in the very least what happened to Davenham. He played no part in their life at all. But a School House man had been "cheeked" by a filthy little outhouse swab. These aliens had to be taught their place.

"What do you mean by that, you awful tick?" shouted Lovelace. "Davenham, go and fetch a hockey stick from Tester's study."

Hazlitt let out with his feet and caught Gordon on the ankle, but the horrible hack he got in return quieted him.

Davenham appeared with a hockey stick.

Gordon managed to get Hazlitt's head between his knees, and Lovelace began to give that worthy a beating he was never likely to forget. In a few minutes he was blubbering for mercy. Fletcher passed by.

"Here you are, Archie," yelled Gordon; "come and have a shot at this swine Hazlitt; we are teaching him that he can't go about knocking off School House hats with impunity."

"Right you are, my lads."

By the time Archie had finished, Hazlitt had almost collapsed. Gordon let him go, and with a hefty boot sent him flying into the cloisters.

"I don't think we shall have any more of him for a bit," said Lovelace, with satisfaction.

"No; these outhouse lads want showing their place from time to time. The School House, after all, is *the* place. We are like Rome, the mother city; the other outhouses are merely provinces of ours. Jolly good of us to let them use our buildings at all. Come and change; we have done a good deed, my friends."

But the matter did not end there. That evening in Buller's dormitories Hazlitt told a story of how Caruthers had been bullying him for no reason, and hacking him till he could hardly sit down. He left out Lovelace's name, because Lovelace was popular with the Buller's crowd. News of this reached Felston, the second prefect. He fumed with rage, and sought Gregory, the Buller's house captain,

"Have you heard the latest? That swine Caruthers has been bullying Hazlitt. He drove him all round the cloisters, hitting him with a hockey stick."

"Good God, the swine! Did he really? My word, I will lay him out in the Three Cock. You wait, that's all. When he plays in the Three Cock, I'll lay him out for dead in the first ten minutes."

In due course this story found its way to the Buller's day-room, where was great rejoicing. So Caruthers was going to be laid out, was he? How damned funny! Hazlitt's heart leapt within him. His evil little mind pictured Gordon being carried off the field, absolutely smashed up. He gloated.

Gordon laughed when he heard of it.

"Oh, well, at any rate I shall have my shot at them first in the Thirds and Two Cock."

He was secretly rather pleased to see that even his enemies had not the slightest doubt about his getting a place in the Three Cock. A House cap was just then his great ambition. But for all that he suffered considerable annoyance. Whenever he went up to the tuck-shop a voice from the Buller's doorway croaked: "Wait for the Three Cock!"

At first it was rather amusing. But soon it got distinctly tiresome. Deep in his heart he cursed the tick Hazlitt and the whole Buller crowd. A joke could be carried to an

extreme. And it slowly dawned on him that, if he did play in the Three Cock, he was in for a remarkably thin time.

Almost the last words he heard as the eight-forty swept out of Fernhurst station on the last morning, with its waving hands and shoutings, was a shriek from the Buller's day-room : " Wait for the Three Cock ! " Gordon laughed for a second, and then looked bored. The jest had ceased to have a shred of humour left upon it. It was naked and ought to be ashamed.

The Easter term opened in the conventional way with rain, slush and influenza. The fields were flooded, the country a lake ; the bare branches dripped incessantly. But for all that the first round of the Thirds began on the first Saturday.

Buller's drew Rogers's. There was no doubt as to the result. It would be a walk-over for Buller's, though Burgoyne might get over the line once or twice.

There was a crowd in front of the pavilion.

" Well, do something, at any rate," said Gordon. " Don't let Buller's get above themselves. You keep them in order."

" Oh yes, we'll sit on them ! " laughed Burgoyne. " By the way, I think it would be rather a good scheme to lay out Hazlitt minor, don't you ? "

Never did any forward in any house match at Fernhurst take the field without the sworn intention of laying out some hated opponent. Nevertheless during the whole time Gordon was at school only one boy was hurt so badly that he had to leave the field. And that was an accident. He broke his collar-bone, falling over by the goal-posts. It had become almost a custom to state whom you were going to lay out before the match. The idea sounds brutal, but it never led to anything. Gordon knew this as well as anyone.

" Good man ! And look here, if you do, I will give you a bob."

" A bargain ? "

" Of course."

"Right, my lad. We will have a good supper to-night in my study."

The match followed the ordinary course. Frenzied juniors rushed up and down the touch-line inarticulate with excitement; the bloods, strolling arm in arm, patronised the game mildly. Buller's won very easily. Hazlitt played quite decently and scored once. Burgoyne went supperless.

The second and third rounds were played; everywhere Buller's triumphed. No house was beaten by less than forty points. Not a try was scored against them. Christy's, who had lost by forty-four points to nil, had, as the least unsuccessful house, the doubtful honour of joining forces with Buller's to play the School House in the final.

The betting was fairly even. Buller's thought they would win; the House, as usual, was certain of victory. The school expected a level game, and on the whole wanted to see a School House win. Buller's had had too much success of late years; and envy was inevitably at work.

The selection of the combined outhouse side caused a lot of consideration. There was once an idea of playing Hazlitt minor, but much to the annoyance of the House this plan was, from the outhouse point of view, wisely dropped. And now Jack Whitaker—he was always known as Jack—enters the story.

Jack was a very decent sort of kid, much (in the School House estimation) above the standard of Buller's day-room. He was a little rowdy and ostentatious, but had the justification of being really good at something. He was a promising half-back, and his cricket was so good that there was talk of his getting a trial for the School Eleven. Gordon and he got on rather well. But he was very young; under fifteen, in fact, and very impetuous.

About a week before the Thirds "the Bull" was discussing the match in the dormitories. Jack was very full of words.

"I say, sir, isn't it awfully lucky for Hazlitt that he is not playing?"

"The Bull" was surprised. Only that evening he had been talking with Hazlitt, and telling him how sorry he was that there was no place for him in the side.

"Why, Jack? I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, well, you see, sir, all the School House fellows had sworn to lay him out!"

"You must not talk like that, Jack. It is not sporting. And it stirs up ill feeling in the school. You can't honestly believe that any gentleman would play a game in that spirit. You have no proof of what you say except mere rumour, I suppose. You mustn't talk like that."

"The Bull" was not at all pleased, and walked away to turn out the light. Whitaker saw he had gone too far and had said more than he meant to. But he couldn't stand the idea that "the Bull" should think he had been repeating merely idle chatter.

"But, sir, I know for certain that in the Christy's match the School House men were offering money to Christy's to lay Hazlitt out."

Buller stopped with his hand on the gas-tap.

"That is a very serious accusation, Jack. Are you telling me that any Fernhurst boys so lack sportsmanlike feeling as to bribe boys in other houses to lay out their rivals, so that it will be easier for them to win."

"Oh, sir, I don't think that they meant that."

"Well, you said it, at any rate."

The gas went out suddenly. "The Bull" strode out without saying good-night. In his study he turned over in his mind the extraordinary story he had heard. If what Jack had told him was the truth, Fernhurst football, which was to him, and to many others, the finest thing in the world, had become little better than league professionalism. Bribes were being offered for men to be laid out. He had never heard of such a thing. There was no one to remind him that the offering of bribes means little to a schoolboy, and the mere talk of "laying people out" still less. It is all a question of custom, of the sense in which phrases are used by the particular speakers who use them.

There are certain words which to-day are vulgar and

disgusting, but which in the days of Shakespeare would have been used in any company without a blush. And this is so merely because time has given the words a different significance. Indeed, from the point of view of the average person, to leave schoolmasters out of the question, the idea of offering bribes to lay out athletes is revolting. And so it is. It is unsportsmanlike, unworthy of English traditions. But when Gordon offered Burgoyne a shilling to lay out Hazlitt, although he said it was a bargain, he meant nothing at all by his offer. He knew Burgoyne. When once he got on the field, he could think of nothing but the game, and forgot all about Hazlitt and himself. Everyone offered bribes, but no one had been known to receive a penny of them. Still, Buller could not be expected to know this. He saw in the affair a menace to the future of Fernhurst sport. Jack's story might be only idle chatter, or it might have some foundation. At any rate he had got to go to the bottom, and sift out the truth for the good of Fernhurst.

After evening chapel on the Sunday before the match the Chief sent for Gordon ; when Gordon arrived he found Harding, the head of the House, there too. The Chief looked worried. There was a row in prospect. Gordon racked his brain to think of anything that could possibly have been found out about him. Of course there were many old troubles that might have been raked up. He had always realised that the hand of the past would still be near the shoulder of the present. Yet, what had he been doing recently ?

" Isn't Hazelton coming, Harding ? " The Chief was speaking.

" Yes, sir ; but I believe he is collecting chapel cards."

Hazelton too. Complications, forsooth. There was an awkward pause. Then Hazelton came in, quite at his ease.

" Sir, the chapel cards ; and I believe you wanted to see me, sir ? "

" Ah, yes, Hazelton ; put the cards on my desk. Now, Caruthers, I want to ask you a question before the head and captain of the House that I hope you will answer

truthfully. Did you offer a boy in Mr Christy's house money to 'lay out,' I believe that was the phrase, a boy in Mr Buller's house in the recent house match."

Gordon thought for a moment. Had he? It was quite likely he had; but he could not remember. Then the scene came back. The crowd in front of the pavilion. Burgoyne: Hazlitt in the offing.

"Yes, sir," he replied, after the instant's hesitation.

"You seem rather doubtful about it."

"Well, sir, I was trying to remember whether I had or not."

The Chief was nettled by such apparent callousness.

"You talk as if you were in the habit of offering such rewards. Are you?"

"Well, sir, it is the sort of thing any fellow might do."

"That is neither here nor there. I doubt the truth of your statement very much. But even if the school had become so generally demoralised as you suggest, that would not be any excuse for you. As a matter of fact, how much did you offer the boy?"

"A shilling, sir."

"Was that a genuine offer, now? If he had done what you wanted him to, would you have paid him?"

Gordon was now well out of his depth. Explanation seemed impossible. Had the offer been genuine? He supposed it had. If the tick had been laid out, Gordon would have been so delighted that he would have stood the whole of Christy's drinks all round.

"Yes, sir," he said quite cheerfully.

A smile that rose to Hazelton's lips was instantly suppressed.

"Ah! rather like hiring assassins in the cheap novelettes. What was your idea? Did you think Hazlitt would have been a help to the School side?"

"No, sir. I hardly think he would have been of much assistance to them."

The idea of Hazlitt being of any use to anyone was very amusing. Gordon always saw the funny side of everything. As a ghost, he would probably have found something cynically amusing in his own funeral.

" Then you did it merely out of spite, I suppose. Do you consider that the football field is a suitable opportunity for the paying-off of old scores ? "

Now, suppose Gordon had poured out the story of how Felston had sworn to lay him out in the Three Cock, and how Hazlitt and others flung the words " Three Cock " into his face for half a term, it would have been certainly an extenuation. But he realised that Hazelton was present. It would not be the proper thing, it would indeed be unpardonable cheek, for him to talk in the presence of the House captain as though his chances of playing in the Three Cock were to be taken for granted. It would be madness to imperil his chances on the football field, merely because he wanted an excuse for a silly little row.

And so he did not answer.

" Well, Caruthers, I sha'n't want you any more. Thank you for being so frank in the matter. As far as I can see, it is the only extenuating circumstance. Harding, Hazelton, just a minute."

Gordon returned to the studies rather amused than disconcerted. He quite saw that the Chief, with his high ideals, would refuse to allow two blacks to make a white, even if that black were of the grey-black shade of which colour boys were allowed to get their school suits made, and which produced anything from light grey to dark brown. He understood and respected the Chief's point of view entirely. But with " the Bull " he was furious. No one but " the Bull " could have reported him ; and, after all, " the Bull " was an old Fernhurstian. He knew the school customs, and unless his memory was decaying, must have remembered the wild way in which boys boast. He must have known it ; but " for the sake of Fernhurst," Buller would say, " this leprosy had to be rooted out." Gordon began to wonder whether it was really a love of Fernhurst that was his standard for all actions, or simply a supreme egotism, which embraced alternately his own interest, his house's interest, and Fernhurst's interest, but never, under any circumstances, never the School House interest !

Hazelton thought much the same. At the Chief's request he made a characteristic speech to the House after prayers.

"Someone who imagines himself a sportsman, and who refuses to disclose his name, but whose identity we can only guess at, has been making some silly remarks about certain play and behaviour in the House. Of course that is all rot. But people have strange ideas, especially those in authority, and we have to be very careful. So for heaven's sake don't go shouting out that you are going to lay everyone out. It only means a row, and, after all, you can do it just as well without talking about it."

There was a roar of laughter; the old system survived.

Next morning in break Gordon passed Buller on his way to the tuck-shop. "The Bull" cut him dead.

The day after, the Chief, having made up his mind on the matter, told Gordon that his Sixth Form privileges had been taken away.

Before a large crowd, in full view of Chief's study window, Gordon that afternoon burnt his straw hat with the Sixth form ribbon on it, and stood over the smouldering ashes proclaiming in tragic tones: "The glory has departed from Israel." His old passion for a theatrical piece of rodomontade was not yet subdued.

For a short time Gordon was rather worried about "l'affaire Hazlitt," as Tester called it. But he soon forgot it entirely in the excitement of the approaching match. Everyone talked about it; there was no other topic of conversation. The night before the match Lovelace could not sit still for a minute. He strode up and down the study murmuring to himself: "We can't lose; we can't; we can't!" Someone looked in to ask if he was going to prepare the Livy.

"Livy?" he gasped. "Who could do any work the night before a house match?"

The someone retired discomforted.

"You know it's absurd," Lovelace went on, "for a master to imagine anyone could do work when the house matches are on. The other day Claremont had me up

and asked me why my work had been so bad lately. I told him that the house matches were so exciting that I could not concentrate my mind on anything else. He looked at me vacantly and said: 'Well, are they really? I don't know whom they excite; they don't excite me.'"

"Dear old poseur; he's keen enough on his own house," Gordon answered drowsily from the depths of the hammock, in which he had almost fallen asleep. He felt incapable of thought. For weeks he had looked forward to the match, and now it was so close he felt strangely languorous, tired in brain and body.

Rain fell steadily all night, and though it cleared off about break, the ground was already under water. It was a cold, gusty day.

By lunch the whole House was quite unbalanced. There was much loud laughter, sudden sweeping silences; an atmosphere of restlessness lay over everyone. Very slowly the minutes dragged by. Gordon sat silent in a far corner of the pavilion. At last the whistle blew, the magenta and black jerseys trailed out on to the field. A cheer rose from the line.

The next hour passed in a whirl of white jerseys, gradually turned black with mud, of magenta forms dashing on to the School forwards, of wild, inarticulate black insects bawling on the touch-line. The pervading impression was mud. Everything was mud; he was mud, the ball was mud. Lovelace was indistinguishable. His own voice leading the scrum seemed strangely unreal. There was a vague feeling of disquiet when, early in the first half, he found himself standing under the posts, while the Buller's half placed the ball for Whitaker to convert. Nothing tangible; then the disquiet changed to a drowsy contentment, the magenta jerseys swept down, dirty white forms came up and went down before them. Morgan rolled over the line. A kick failed. Half-time came, Hazelton came on, and said a lot of things to him, which he answered unconsciously.

A whistle blew. Once more the magenta jerseys swept everything before them. There seemed no white jerseys

at all. Numberless times he watched Lovelace taking the place kick. He thought he heard Mansell shrieking: "Heave it into them! Well done! Now you've got them!" Once he had a sensation of kicking the ball past the halves, he seemed clear, the full-back rushed up and fell in front of him, the ball stopped for a second, he rolled on. He heard someone coming up behind him, the line grew dimly white under his feet; he fell on the ball; there was a tremendous roar of cheering. The whistle went in short, sharp blasts. The game was over.

And then he realised that the House had won, that his hopes were satisfied, that the Buller crowd had been routed, that the cup would shimmer on the mantelpiece. A wave of wild exultation came over him. The House poured over the touch-line, yelling and shouting. It was all "a wonder and a wild desire."

Then came the glorious reaction, "the bright glory of after battle wine." The tea in the tuck-shop. They were out of training. Then the perfect laziness of lying full-length in his hammock, talking of the splendid victory. Then came the House tea. It was much like the Roman triumph. The whole House sat in their places ten minutes before six. Tablecloths were removed; everyone took down heavy books, boots, sticks. Then when the Abbey struck six, Lovelace led the side into hall, up to the dais, to the Sixth Form table. Everyone shouted, roared, beat the tables. Dust arose. It was very hard to breathe. The Chief came and made a speech. There was more shouting, more shrieking, more beating of tables.

At last hall came with its gift of real rest. Gordon lay in the hammock, Lovelace reposed with his feet on the table. Everyone came in to congratulate them. Hazelton invited them in second hall to supper in the games study; the gramophone played rag-time choruses. Gordon sang all of them. Everyone was gloriously, unutterably happy.

Meredith sent a wire: "Well done, House: now for the Two Cock."

In the dormitory Hazelton was talking over the match.

"By Jove, when that side is the Three Cock, we shall

win by fifty points. Lord, I do envy you, Caruthers! You will see the day, and be in at the finish. I shall only shout from the touch-line." And he added: "My God, I shall shout, too."

There was nothing to mar the extreme joyousness of life. The world lay at Gordon's feet. He had only to stoop to pick it up.

CHAPTER V

DUAL PERSONALITY

THE Two Cock was always played a fortnight after the Thirds, and during that fortnight the outhouses had to play off among themselves three preliminary rounds. For them it was a remarkably strenuous time. The two best outhouse sides had, in fact, to play four house matches in twelve days. But it was possible for the School House to take things easily for at least half a week. And these three days out of training meant a lot to Gordon and others, who would have to play not only in the Two Cock, but most probably in the Three Cock as well. It prevented staleness; and staleness was the great danger that all outhouse sides had to face.

The week after the Thirds was regarded as a fairly slack time before the strenuous week that culminated in the Two Cock. There would probably be only one game—on the Saturday; and that a short quarter-of-an-hour-each-way affair. It was usually a quite uneventful time. This term, however, an occurrence took place that had a big effect on the growth of Gordon's character.

Finnemore had caught influenza; the Chief had to go for a week to Oxford. The Sixth was at a loose end. Various masters took it in various subjects, or at least were supposed to. Most of the week was spent in the studies, as the master in charge forgot to turn up.

One afternoon, Ferrers was to take them in English. But Ferrers was engaged in writing an article on the "New Public School Boy" for *The Cornhill Magazine*, and wanted to be quiet. He sent the form to their studies to write an essay on a typical Ferrers subject: "Poetry is in the first instance the outpouring of a rebel." It had to be shown up by six o'clock.

Gordon revelled in it. During the long afternoon he poured out his fierce soul. His life was just now a strange paradox. Half the time he thought of poetry, worshipping any sort of rebellion against the conventional standards of living. At other times he was like the ordinary Philistine, blindly worshipping games, never seeing that they led nowhere, and were as a blind alley. This afternoon Gordon forgot everything but Swinburne, Byron, Rossetti, and the poets of revolt. He stigmatised Wordsworth as a doddering old man, not knowing that his return to nature was the greatest revolution in English literature. In a text-book he saw Shelley described as a rebel. He got a copy of his works out of the library, but found little there resembling the work of his own favourite. However, he quoted a verse out of *O World, O Life, O Time!* and decided to search more deeply later on. The bulk of the essay was a glowing eulogy of *The Hymn to Proserpine* and *Don Juan.* It was very dogmatic, very absurd in parts, but it had the merit of enthusiasm, and, at any rate, showed a genuine appreciation of a certain class of literature.

Well satisfied, he made his way across to the Sixth Form room, and found Ferrers gazing at a pile of papers, as Hercules must have gazed at the Augean stables.

"Um," said Ferrers, "who are you?"

"Caruthers, sir. I have brought you the essay you set the Sixth."

"Right; let's have a look at it; hope it is better than the stuff I have just been reading."

"Yes, yes, um—ah," he murmured to himself, as he read on. There was clearly some hankering after style, some searching for an idea. Ferrers dearly wanted to smile at the attack on Wordsworth, and the comparison between Swinburne and Milton (whom Gordon had never read), all in favour of the Pre-Raphaelite. But he knew that it would be a fatal thing to do; it would seem so superior; the master must come down to the boy's level. He read on to the end of the wild, sprawling peroration.

"Not bad stuff, Caruthers, not bad at all. Far and away better than anything I have so far struck. I must

talk to you again about this; I am glad you love Byron; I do myself; people run him down—fools, that is. You stick to Byron, he is all right. And don't despise the rest too much. Have a shot at Keats and Shelley. They are not so powerful, but jolly good all the same, very fine stuff. . . . Try *The Pot of Basil.* Must rush off now. Are you in training? No! Not yet. Right. Come up to tea to-morrow. Good-night."

And thus began a friendship that was the most permanent in Gordon's school career.

Every Friday he used to climb up the hill past Rogers's house, and step out down the white London road to Ferrers's cosy little home. Over a cup of tea he read an essay. Ferrers would lie back listening, and then discuss it with him. He sometimes blamed the actual expression of it, but he never found fault on questions of taste. He let Gordon browse at will in the fields of English literature; he suggested books he thought Gordon would like; he did not try to rush him on. There was heaps of time; he would let Gordon develop on his own lines.

From these evenings Gordon derived a pleasure that he found it hard to explain. He was thankful to get away from the footer talk, the inevitable intrigues, scandals, all in fact that went to form the daily curriculum. The world of ideas was far more attractive. Ferrers, although himself a quarter-mile Blue, looked upon games as a recreation, and upon school life as a mud-heap that had to be washed clean. Poetry, drama, the modern novel, these were what Ferrers loved; and Gordon was glad to find someone who thought like this. He felt uplifted after his talks with Ferrers; he walked back to the House raising wonderful images of beauty, almost dancing with joy. Then as the school gates rose before him, and he heard the sound of a football bouncing in the court, the old routine caught him once more. He plunged into the old life with the same zest. He devised a new scheme for avoiding work, thought out an idea for teaching forwards to heel, laughed, discussed athletics and was well content. He tried to analyse his feelings, but could not. Looking back, he saw that in the

past he had been quite different. He was now two separate persons; then he had been himself alone. What was he now? At times he was the dreamer, the lover of art and poetry; at another the politician, the fighter who lived every minute of his life deeply to the full, with one fixed aim before him. Gordon wondered if this apparent paradox in himself was in any way an answer of the enigma that an artist's life so frequently was utterly different from the broad outlines of his work. Browning had talked of a man having "two soul-sides." Had he two soul-sides, one for the world, the other for art—and Ferrers? But then Browning had spoken contemptuously of the "one to face the world with." Surely games were as good as poetry? Or weren't they, after all? He felt an unanswerable doubt, and at such times of introspection he would stop trying to think and merely let himself be carried on in whatever course fortune chose to bear him. And so the Jekyll and Hyde business went on.

CHAPTER VI

THE GAMES COMMITTEE

In the mud and the rain the School House Two Cock team, coming up early from a puntabout, joined the crowd watching the last stages of the Buller's *v.* Claremont's house match, and cheered Claremont's to the echo. It was a remarkably fine game. When "no side" was called, the score was nine all. Extra time was played, and just before the close, amid great enthusiasm, a limping Claremont's forward fell over the line from the line out. None shouted louder than the School House contingent. Everyone had grown tired of the Buller's domination. They had been successful too long. For two years they had not lost a single house match. The Thirds had been their first reverse; but even then they had triumphed over all their outhouse opponents. This was the first occasion, since Gordon had been at Fernhurst, that the Buller's colours had been lowered by an outhouse side. It signified the breaking up of their rule. Gordon shouted like the Vengeance following the tumbrils. He roared loudly under "the Bull's" nose, stamped off the field to tea, without a thought of the effect which his demonstration might have had upon "the Bull" himself.

As it happened, to "the Bull" the incident meant a lot.

"What is the reason of it?" he said to Felston that evening. "How have I made these School House men, and especially Caruthers, hate me? They seem to delight in the defeat of my house. Of course, I can understand their wanting their house to beat mine, but why should they worry so much about Claremont's doing so? I can't understand it; and Caruthers will be leading the school scrum in two years. We must not have bad feeling between

the houses. Honest rivalry is all right; but there seems so much spite about it all nowadays. It was not so when I was a boy, and it wasn't so three years ago. I don't understand."

A climax was reached in the Two Cock, a match rendered famous in Fernhurst history by the amazing refereeing of a new master named Princeford, who had come as a stop-gap for one term. The match was played in the mud and slush, and was entirely devoid of incident. The play rolled from one end of the ground to the other. Archie performed prodigies of valour; Gordon did some brilliant things; Collins was quite fierce; but good football was impossible under the circumstances. Early in the first half, amid tremendous cheering, Lovelace scored a fine try, by the touch-line. There was no doubt about it. The school lined up behind the posts. But Princeford would have none of it. He came up, fussing and important:

"No try, there. Knock on. Scrum!"

A gasp went up from both sides. Was the man blind?

"What is the fool talking about?" thundered Gordon.

Princeford was round in a second: "Who said that?"

Gordon stepped forward.

"Ah, I shall remember you."

The game continued; the outhouses amazed at such luck; the School House sullen and indignant. The play developed into a series of forward rushes resulting in nothing. It was an amazingly dull game to watch. From one of these rushes Gordon got clear; the full-back fell on the ball, Gordon took a huge kick at the ball. One had to kick hard on such a sticky ground. He missed the ball, and caught the back on the side of the head.

"Oh, damned sorry," he said.

It was quite unintentional, as would have been obvious to anyone who knew anything about the game. No one would be fool enough to kick the man, when by kicking the ball he might score a try. But Princeford was on Gordon like a shot. He began to lecture him before all the masters on unsportsmanlike play, and threatened to send him off the field. Gordon glowered at him. It was a combat of

temperaments. The game resulted in a draw. No try was scored. It was a dull performance, occasionally relieved by individual brilliance. Everyone was disappointed.

Sullen and silent, the House side trooped up to tea. They had won the match, of that there was no doubt. And they had been done out of their victory.

The limit was reached when, muddy and cold, they found that the new boot-boy had forgotten to heat the boiler, and there was only cold water to wash in.

The changing-room was filled with the sound of oaths and curses.

But when the effects of Princeford's refereeing and the boot-boy's forgetfulness had worn off slightly, the House felt more content. After all, they had not been beaten. They had got the cup for half the year at any rate. Things might be worse. And when in hall that night Hazelton gave Gordon his House cap, all his rage was overwhelmed by the feeling that his dearest object had been achieved. The boot-boy was forgiven; Princeford faded into the background of insignificance from which he had temporarily emerged.

But the matter did not end there: other fingers were itching to be in the pie. Christy and Rogers, walking up from the field together, came to the conclusion that that incorrigible nuisance Caruthers had disgraced Fernhurst football. Princeford was a master from Sedbury; he had only come for one term as a special concession, because his headmaster was a great friend of the Chief. What sort of an impression would he carry away of Fernhurst manners and sportsmanship, if Caruthers should be allowed to go unpunished, not only for playing a deliberately foul game, but also for using most foul language? And so these two, neither of whom knew anything about football, while both were immensely aware of their own importance, made their way to "the Bull's" study to pour out their grievances. "The Bull" was laid up with influenza, and had been prevented from watching the match. They found him lying on his sofa, very depressed and worried. For over an hour they elaborated the tale of Gordon's misconduct.

They pointed out that the object of house matches was to promote a keenness in school football, and to provide interest for those who were not good enough to get into the school team. The School House had for years during the Easter term isolated itself from the rest of the school. It had considered itself as apart, a school in itself. Such an attitude militated against *esprit de corps*; it made the house appear more important than the school. It led to bad feeling between houses. In Caruthers were developed all the worst faults of this system. His keenness for his house had so far drowned his affection for his school that he used any tactics to reach his end. He took defeat in an unsportsmanlike manner. This afternoon's play had made this clear. And what was worst of all was that Caruthers had a sufficient personality to attract others. "Moths are always attracted by the flame," said Rogers pompously. If Caruthers were dealt with effectively at once, this poisonous School House notion of its own importance would collapse. Was it going to be put an end to? That was the question they put to Mr Buller; and they took over an hour in putting it.

"The Bull" listened to all they had to say, and as soon as they began repeating themselves, and he realised they had given all the information they could, told them he had now to dress for dinner, but that he would consider the matter carefully and let them know his opinion later on. Like two obsequious courtiers before an Eastern monarch, Rogers and Christy bowed themselves out, inarticulate with advice and last words.

"The Bull" smiled. He was too big a man to be taken in by such obvious hypocrisy. These men amused him greatly, especially because they both thought he took them seriously. But, for all that, he saw that there was a good deal of truth in what they had said. He wished he had been at the game himself. It was so hard to form an estimate on the strength of partial onlookers. Princeford's refereeing had been exasperating; but, damn it, even if it had, a sportsman should not make a fuss about it! It was all part of the game. But Caruthers did not treat a

House match as a game, but as the real business of life. That was what rankled. Caruthers would laugh when he dropped a catch in a Colts match, or missed his collar on the upper; but in a House match his face would be set, his eyes wide and eager. Humour had for the moment ceased to exist, as far as he was concerned. He clearly preferred his house to his school. Was he stirring up any feeling between the outhouses and the School House? He remembered an occasion terms back when Gordon in a House game had shouted out: "Let the swine have it." Then, again, there was that affair of bribing Burgoyne to lay out one of his men. And then the incident this afternoon. Outwardly he was doing his very best to separate the interests of his house from those of the school, to split Fernhurst into two factions. But supposing, after all, these were merely outward signs, supposing Gordon's excessive keenness, coupled with the rash hotheadedness of youth, led him where his cooler judgment would have checked him. If that were so, and if strong measures were taken, might not his keenness change into a hatred of Fernhurst, might it not lead him to open antagonism with the rest of the school? Punishment might merely inflame and not crush him, while if his feelings were only the natural effervescence of youth, they would wear down in time, and then all would be well. Yet he realised that it is the things which show that count in this world; a man is judged not by what he is, but by what he appears to be. Everything pointed to the belief that Gordon was working against the interests of Fernhurst; whether he actually meant to do so or not was immaterial. He had to be dealt with as if it was deliberate. It might be hard on him, but it was not the interests of the individual, but of the community, that had to be considered.

"The Bull" sent for Akerman, the school captain, after chapel on Sunday morning.

"Akerman, I want to speak to you about Caruthers's behaviour in the Two Cock yesterday afternoon. Of course, I did not see what happened, but from what I have heard I think measures ought to be taken. It is a serious

matter. Light measures are no good. I know Caruthers; you have got to crush him, or he will laugh at you. I think what is required is a thrashing from the Games Committee. He is bound to be awed by the disapproval of a body representing Fernhurst football. I suppose now that the Games Committee wouldn't raise any objection? What about Hazelton?"

"Well, sir, Hazelton went to the matron last night, and they discovered he had got mumps. I just passed him on the way to the sanatorium."

"Um! That means there is no School House representative. There must be one. It would not do for it to appear a school thing, got up against a School House boy. It would only help to alienate the two parties still more. Let's see, who is the next senior man in the School House?"

"Pilcher, sir."

Pilcher was one of those people who, though quite efficient at everything—he was in the Upper Sixth—pass through the school without leaving any mark behind them. He was outside three-quarter, and was well worth his place in the side, but he was in no way a blood. He was never seen. He was always in his study. His was a blameless, uneventful career.

"Well, he won't raise any objection, will he?"

"I shouldn't think so, sir."

Akerman had difficulty in not smiling.

"Oh, well, then, you had better call a meeting of the Games Committee this afternoon and talk over the matter. If anyone makes a fuss, say I agree with it; and I expect it will be all right."

There was no need, however, for any recourse to the oracle. The Games Committee consisted of the captains of each house. None of them cared the least what happened to Caruthers; he was nothing to them. Pilcher supposed it was all right. The grand remonstrance was passed.

On Monday at twelve-thirty Gordon was summoned by a fag to attend in the school library. The six members of the Games Committee sat round a circular table on which lay two canes. It all looked very impressive.

Akerman rose. He began to read a speech off a piece of school paper. Gordon had wondered why he had been so very energetic in taking down notes during the Chief's divinity lecture that morning. The speech went on. It was full of the inevitable platitudes about *esprit de corps* and a sportsmanlike spirit. Now and then Akerman stumbled, and had some difficulty in reading his own writing. If there had not hung over him the prospect of a very severe beating, Gordon would have enjoyed himself thoroughly. Akerman was so pricelessly absurd. The rest looked painfully self-conscious. Why could not Akerman have learnt his speech? It was so bad that he could not imagine anyone having any difficulty in making it up as he went along. Akerman was so afraid of expressing an opinion. He prefaced every remark with "Mr Buller says." It gave a sense of security. The speech ended; everyone except Gordon was relieved.

"Bend over there."

The beating was not so horrible an ordeal as he had expected. In the same spirit in which the outhouse captains had raised no objection, merely because they did not care in the least what happened to Gordon, so now they did not take any particular trouble to hurt him. The ordeal was rather a fiasco.

A halting oration had led to an even tamer execution. As Gordon walked down the library steps he was painfully aware of having been the principal character in a scene of sustained bathos. The body that represented Fernhurst football had scarcely risen to the dignity of its trust.

And then a sudden wave of feeling swept over him; and he saw the horrible unfairness of the whole thing. It did not matter that Akerman had made himself utterly ludicrous, or that the rest of the Games Committee had been led to carry out a programme which they knew to be hypocritical. It was the spirit that mattered. And at the back of all moved "the Bull" pulling the strings. In front of the School House porch, clearly, dispassionately, Gordon put his case.

"I know when I play football I get a bit excited; I know my feet fly over all the place. They did that ever since I was a baby. I know I sometimes lose my temper. But I have been like that always. I have played the same game in the Thirds, and in the Colts, my first term and yesterday. But nobody said anything then. Do you remember the Milton match? I went a bit far then: I was fearfully ashamed of myself afterwards; I thought my play had been a disgrace to the school. But did 'the Bull' think so? Good Lord, no. He gave the side a jaw, and said that they were a disgrace to the school, with the exception of me! I played hard and all that, while the rest slacked and funked! I was singled out for praise in the roughest game I have ever played. And now what happens? The House begins to win its matches; 'the Bull' sees his house losing cup after cup. He and Akerman and the other fools think something must be done. So they wait for an opportunity and then give me a Games Committee beating, to try and frighten the rest of the House. They talked about my unsportsmanlike play. They did not mind when I played rough against Milton. Oh dear, no! But when they find their own dirty shins being hacked, they sit up and shriek. Oh, isn't it all fair! And they wait till Hazelton stops out, too!"

Everyone agreed with him. From Dan to Beersheba there was but one opinion. Buller had not been playing the game. The authorities were against them. The House would have to cling together to protect its rights. They could not have Buller trampling on them, dictating terms. He had begun the contest; they would be prepared for him next time. An aura of antagonism overhung the grey studies. Members of Buller's house were dealt with in the sweeping delineation of "the swine across the road." For the rest of the term, every time Princeford passed the School House on his way to the common room, a whistle blew from the dark recesses of the studies, and some voice shouted: "No try; off-side!" "The Bull" himself was looked on with a general suspicion. The inevitable had happened. "The Bull" in his attempt to sacrifice the

individual to the community had forgotten that the community is at the mercy of the individual. The world is composed of a number of individuals round whom parties and nations cling. "The Bull" had made an attack on the individual, and the community that Gordon represented took up his attitude of defiance, strengthening his resolve not to give way, to keep the House independent of the tyranny that drew five outhouses together as one. The House was not to be coerced. Its members would be free to think, to do, to speak as they thought best. From that moment Gordon took the interests of the House and not Fernhurst as the standard by which to judge all his thoughts and actions.

And it so happened that just at this moment, when the House was bubbling over with suppressed wrath, a chance was given them of showing their independence and defiance.

CHAPTER VII

REBELLION

On the Wednesday after the Games Committee's activities in the library, Ferrers banged into Betteridge's study, his arms laden with books. There was a Stoics meeting on the next Saturday, and the card drawn up at the beginning of the term announced that there would be a reading of *Arms and the Man*, by Bernard Shaw. But Ferrers, who was now president, never took any notice of the programme, which he invariably altered a day or two before the meeting. This imposed quite a considerable strain on those who had to get up fresh parts and prepare different speeches at a second's notice. But as the alterations were nearly always an improvement no one minded.

"Sorry, Betteridge—had to change Stoics' thing. Just picked up this—*Younger Generation*, by Stanley Houghton—ordered fifteen copies from Sidgwick & Jackson—good publishers. Do you know them? I've marked our parts—here they are—no more time. Good-night."

He was gone in a second. And the unfortunate secretary was left with the lot of distributing copies and drawing up fresh notices. It was just on lock-up, so there was no time to do anything till the next day. He settled himself down to read the play. In a very short while he was thoroughly engrossed; by the time he had reached the end of the first act he had no doubt that Saturday would witness the most successful meeting of the Stoics since the historic occasion when Macdonald and Rogers had been persuaded to speak on opposite sides on "Trade Unionism," and Rogers had been most gloriously routed.

Betteridge went in search of Tester and Gordon.

"Come up to my study and read a play Ferrers has got hold of for the Stoics. It's glorious stuff."

"All right," said Gordon. "I will go and fetch Rudd."

"For God's sake, don't bring that outsider."

"Oh, hell, why not? He is quite respectable; and, after all, he is one of the best of our regular readers."

"All right then: fetch him along."

Since their scandalous ramble Gordon had become more or less friends with Rudd, and had to a large extent helped to make his life more bearable.

The four sat silent, reading the play. There was occasionally a suppressed laugh: otherwise no one spoke at all.

In under an hour they had all finished.

"Jolly good," said Gordon. "I do like seeing this younger generation up against the rotten conventions of the mid-Victorian era."

"Deal gently with them," murmured Betteridge. "Their horsehair arm-chairs have stood the test of time very well."

"Too well; but their Puritan ideas are in the melting-pot now. Their day is over."

"You know I am not sure that the Stoics is the right audience for a play like this," said Tester.

"Good heavens, man," protested Gordon, "you don't think it would corrupt their morals, do you?"

"Of course not, you ass! I don't think they would understand it: that's all. They will laugh at it, and think it funny. But they won't really see what Houghton is driving at. They won't understand that he is trying to cut away the shackles of mature thought that are impeding the limbs of youth. The lads in the Remove will be frightfully amused; they will think the father an awful old fool, and the son the devil of a rip. They won't see that both of them are real characters, and that a hundred families to-day are working out their own little tragedy just on these very lines."

"But surely there really are no fathers quite so absurd as old Kennion. Does not Houghton exaggerate the type, as Dickens exaggerates all his types?"

"Oh no, he's real enough; I expect there are a good many like him living in Fernhurst now."

The truth of the last remark was brought home three days later.

On the Friday before the debate Ferrers got a bad attack of influenza. There would be no one to take the chair. Moved by an instinct of courtesy, Ferrers wrote to Christy a little note, enclosing the book, and asking him to preside.

On Saturday morning Christy went up to Betteridge in break.

"Ah, Betteridge, Mr Ferrers has asked me to take the chair at the Stoics. Well, I myself would not be present when such a play was read. It is aimed at the very roots of domestic morality. It might do very well in a small circle of Senior boys. But it would have a very serious effect on young boys who are not as mature as you or I are. None of my house will attend; and, from a conversation I had with Mr Rogers and Mr Claremont, I am fairly certain they will not allow their houses to go either. It would be really much better to wait until Mr Ferrers is well again before anything is done. It would be quite easy to postpone the meeting, I suppose."

"Oh yes, sir, of course."

Betteridge was not paying much attention: he was thinking hard. The bell for school rang.

"That will be all right then, Betteridge."

"Quite, thank you, sir."

Christy, bubbling with satisfaction, rushed off to tell the head of Buller's that the meeting had been postponed. Things were turning out well for him. He had obtained the beating of Caruthers, and now he had most distinctly scored off Ferrers. He did not stop to think that both these campaigns had been carried on behind his enemy's back.

But in his moment of triumph over Ferrers he did not pause to think whether he had also triumphed over the School House spirit of antagonism which he himself had stirred up.

During the half-hour between morning school and lunch, Betteridge, Tester and Gordon held a council of war.

"Of course, whatever we do," said Betteridge, "is bound to be in the nature of farce. Three houses, you see, won't turn up at all, Abercrombie's hardly ever sends anyone,

and I don't mind betting that Christy gets round 'the Bull' somehow."

"Yes; but, confound it all," said Gordon, "are we going to be dictated to by these outhouse potentates? The Stoics is more a School House society than anything else; and, what's more, it is going to remain so, too. These outhouse men can come or go if they want to. It does not matter to us. Let us read this play with a School House cast, carry the thing through somehow, and show these fools like Christy what we think of them. Now is our chance of proving our independence."

"Won't there be a hell of a row, though?" said Betteridge reluctantly.

"What if there is, man?" said Gordon. "We can't help that. Somehow or other that play is going to be read. Let this evening be a symbol of the House's attitude. These houses have flung down the glove. They beat our forwards when we win matches, and they try and stop our meetings. Damn it, we'll pick up the glove!"

"Yes," shouted Gordon, "and fling it in their snivelling faces."

Betteridge drew up a huge notice of the meeting after hall and posted it on the school board. It ran as follows:

> In spite of the fact that many of the usual readers will be prevented from attending the Second Meeting of the Stoics this term, the Society will read, at seven-thirty, in the School House Reading Room,
>
> *THE YOUNGER GENERATION*
>
> By Stanley Houghton
>
> Cast.....
>
> (*Signed*) C. P. Betteridge.

That evening was historic. Every member of the School House attended the meeting, the members of the day-room as well as those from the studies. The reading-room was

packed. It was literally a record meeting. The reading was abominable. Parts were forced at the eleventh hour on reluctant and totally unsuitable persons. But somehow or other they got through it in the end ; and that was all that mattered.

But still it was not without a little nervousness that the conspirators awaited developments. Christy saw the notice and fumed. Ferrers heard of it and laughed. Rogers rushed to the Chief palpitating with rage.

After lunch the Chief sent for Betteridge, and asked for a copy of *The Younger Generation*. There was an air of nervous anticipation pervading the studies. Just before tea the Chief sent for Betteridge again.

" A very interesting play. Very modern, of course, but extremely clever. Thank you so much for lending it me. I wish I had been at the reading. A record attendance, I hear. Well, ask me to come next time you get as good a play as that."

There was no reference to the outhouse boycott. The Chief was very tactful, and, moreover, he had enjoyed reading the play immensely. Besides, it would not have done any good if he had made a fuss, especially when he was entirely in sympathy with Betteridge.

In *The Fernhurst School Magazine*, which was edited by Betteridge, there appeared the following paragraph :—

" On Saturday, 5th March, before a record and appreciative audience, the Stoics read *The Younger Generation*, by Stanley Houghton. There was no one who failed to realise the extraordinary insight into the life of the day that made such a work possible. The enthusiasm and applause were highly significant, as showing what a keen interest the school is taking in all questions of social and domestic life. There were rather fewer representatives from the outhouses than usual, but this was as well, as there would have been little room for them."

The victory of Christy was not so very complete after all.

With this successful demonstration Gordon's excitement in House politics abated.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DAWNING OF MANY DREAMS

THE Three Cock came and went, bringing with it House caps for Lovelace, Collins and Fletcher, but it caused little stir. Everyone had foreseen the result, and without Hazelton (ill with mumps) the House stood little chance of keeping the score under fifty. Hostilities were declared closed for the time being. The four weeks of training for the sports came on, and Gordon's Sixth Form privileges were restored. For a short time the hold of athleticism was weakened, and as it weakened, the hold of literature became more firm.

" House Caps " were always allowed a fairly slack time after the Three Cock, and Gordon made the best of his. While the last traces of winter were disappearing, and the evenings began to draw out into long, lingering sunsets, he voyaged on into the unknown waters of poetry. Keats and Shelley, names which had once meant nothing to him, now became his living prophets. He felt his own life coloured by their interpretations. During the days of his quest for power, when the scent of battle had led him on, he had found inspiration only in those whose moods coincided with his own. But now that the contest was over, and strife was merged into a temporary lull, there came a check in the fiery search for achievements, he found pleasure in the gentler but far more beautiful melodies of Keats. Byron and Swinburne had beaten so loudly on their drums, and blown so forcibly on the clarion that his ears had been deafened. But in the peaceful afterglow of satisfied desire he asked rather for soft and quiet music.

During this time he saw a great deal of Ferrers. Together they discussed all the questions that to them seemed most

vital. The Public School system came in for a great deal of abuse.

"It's rotten to the core," Ferrers would say, "rotten, absolutely. Boys come here fresh from preparatory schools. If they are clever and get into higher forms, they are put among bigger boys, and they get their outlook coloured by them. They get wrong impressions shoved into their heads, cease to think at all, lose all sense of honesty and morality. Then the school that has made them like this finds out what they are, and sends them away."

"By Jove, that's just what Jeffries said."

"Jeffries—who is Jeffries? I don't know him."

"He was a splendid fellow; but, like most other people, he followed the crowd, then got caught and had to go."

"That is it; always the same. Usually the least bad are sacked, too; never heard of a real rake getting sent away; the rakes are far too clever. Cleverness is what counts, counts all through life. A man is expelled only because he is not clever enough to avoid being caught, and then the school thinks it's saving the others by sending him away. And it does no good. The big wrong 'un stays on, only the weak one goes. Of course I don't see how you can alter it. You've got to root the whole system out. Human nature is a thing that has got to be dealt with carefully, not in the half-hearted way it is here."

Ferrers wrote a great deal about Public Schools to the various London papers. He was fast winning a name in the educational world. But he was always being asked to modify statements, and to show life as it was not. He raved against the weakness of the authorities.

"They don't want to know the truth," he said, "they are afraid to hear it. 'Tell us lies,' that's what they say. 'Lull us into a false security. A big bust-up is coming soon, but keep it off till after we are gone.' They know their house is built on sand, running out into the river. They want just to barricade their own tiny houses for a little. I want to go and search for the big firm land, but they are too comfortable on their cushions and fine linen to dare to move. Oh, prophesy smooth things!"

Gordon listened intently to it all. Ferrers was his ideal. Often they would talk of books: of the modern novel; of Compton Mackenzie, in whom idealism and realism were one; of Rupert Brooke, the coming poet, who was to make men believe in the beauties of this earth, instead of hankering after an immaterial hereafter; of their scorn for Kipling's bourgeois jingoism; of the Elizabethan drama, of Marlowe, Beaumont, Webster. They were very wonderful, those hours. Gordon felt that he had at last, after wandering far, come to his continuing city. Glancing back over his last two years, he used to laugh and say:

"I don't regret them; I was happy; and the only thing to regret is unhappiness. But I have outgrown them; they did not last. They were what Stephen Phillips would number among the 'over-beautiful, quick fading things.' They were good days, though. But I am happier now. I can see the future spreading out before me. Next winter Hunter will be captain, but I shall be second in the team and lead the forwards. It will be a year of preparation. Then will come my year of captaincy. All the things I wanted seem falling into my hands. 'Life is sweet, brother,' life is sweet!"

And, looking back, it seemed as if in the wild orgy of Pack Monday Fair he had finally burnt the old garments and put on the new. That day had been the funeral pyre of his old life; and, like Sardanapalus, it had died of its own free will. A glorious end; no anti-climax. But the future was still more glorious. When he watched the morning sun flicker white on the broad Eversham road from the station to the Abbey, the leaves breaking on the lindens, the dim lights waking in the chapel on Sunday, he saw how far he had outgrown his old self. Now he had begun to perceive what life's aim should be—the search for beauty. Tester had been right when he said that beauty was the only thing worth having, the one ideal time could not tarnish, nor the years destroy. And yet Tester was not satisfied. The hold of the world was too strong on him. He could see where others were going wrong, but he himself was all astray, at times morbidly wretched, at

others hilarious with excitement. It was merely a question of temperament. Gordon saw stretching before him the fulfilment of his hopes. There was no niche for failure. His destiny would unroll smoothly like a great machine; he was at peace, in sympathy with a world of beautiful ideas and dreams. At times he would feel an unreasoning anger with the Public School system, but his rage soon cooled down. After all, it had left him at the last unscathed, and was in the future to bring many gifts. Others might be broken on the wheel; but he was still sufficiently an egoist, sufficiently self-centred to be indifferent to them. He had come through, with luck perhaps, but still he had come through. That was all that mattered. He had not read Matthew Arnold's *Rugby Chapel*. If he had, he might have recognised himself in the pilgrim who had saved only himself, while the world was full of others, like the Chief, who were "bringing their sheep in their hand." But probably even if he had read the poem at that time, he would have been too happy, too self-contented, too successful to realise its poignant truth. And it would not have been surprising. Youth is always intolerant and self-centred. It is only when we grow old, and see so "little done of all we so gaily set out to do," that we suddenly appreciate that, even if we have ourselves failed, yet if we can by our experience help someone else to succeed, our life will not be utterly vain. Altruism is the philosophy of middle age, and though youth can never see it, the most completely perfect philosophy of all.

On a few, but very few, occasions Gordon was temporarily roused out of his secure atmosphere. One of these was on the last day of term, when *The Fernhurst School Magazine* appeared, with a letter suggesting that the Three Cock should be changed into a Two Cock, since the School House had for the last few years proved itself so incapable of holding out against the strong outhouse combination of three houses against one. Much of what the writer said was true. The House numbered only about seventy, while each outhouse contained some forty boys, with perhaps six day boys attached to each. The House did

not take in day boys, so that the House was always playing against a selection from double its number. A Two Cock would be far fairer. Nevertheless the House was furious.

"Confounded old ass," said Mansell. "I believe Claremont wrote it. Let him wait till next year and he will see his beastly blue shirts rolled in the mud."

"But it is such infernal swank," said Gordon. "We smashed them in the Thirds; to all intents and purposes we routed them in the Two Cock; the only thing the outhouses won was the Three Cock; and they are so bucked about that that they want to clinch a victory, get up and shout: 'Look at us, what devils of fine fellows we are! You can't touch us. Better take charity.' Unutterable conceit! Why, we won four times running about seven years ago. I have a good mind to go to Claremont and give it him straight. Betteridge, you absurd ass, why did you print this thing?"

"Well, you see, there were a few rather risky things in the paper, and I thought if I cut it out he might rather hack about the rest of the rag. And, besides, it will be an awful score when we win next year, as we are absolutely certain to. Can't you imagine the account: 'Last year some rather foolhardy persons doubted the ability of the School House to deal with a combined side of the best three outhouses, and they were rash enough to express their doubts in print. But this year, under the able captaincy of G. F. Hunter, with the forwards admirably led by G. R. Caruthers, the House gained a thoroughly deserved victory by fifteen points to three.' We shall crow then, my lads, sha'n't we?"

"Yes, it will be all right then," said Mansell. "My lord, I wish I was going to be here to play in it. My governor is a fool to make me leave and go to France."

Mansell was leaving at the end of the term.

"Well, all the same, it's a vile insult to the House," said Gordon. "Whether he meant it or not, it's an insult."

But his annoyance passed quickly. He was far too certain of the future to worry much about what anyone

said. He was sure the House would win in the end. It was only a question of time. And when the prize-giving came, his anger had passed into a wild happiness. His place in form gave him little satisfaction, for he was easily bottom of the Sixth; but after the books had been given there came the turn of the House cups. Amid enormous cheers Lovelace went up for the Thirds cup; amid still greater he and the outhouse captain stepped up together to receive the Two Cock cup. Then at tea Hazelton walked into hall carrying the two trophies to place on the mantelpiece, and the House burst forth in a roar of cheering. It was all sheer joy; and beyond the present glory shone the dawn of great triumphs to come. The House was just entering on its career of success. The day of Buller's was at an end. There only remained to them the remnants of their earlier glory. Where they had stood the House was about to stand. And in that hour of triumph Gordon himself would be the protagonist.

The short Easter holidays passed in a whirl of happiness. Over the fresh grass of Hampstead Heath Gordon wandered alone on those April mornings, when the trees were breaking into a green splendour, when the long waters of the Welsh Harp lay out in the morning sun like a sheet of gold. Looking across from the firs he saw the spire of Harrow church cutting the red sky, and the long stretch of country in between rolling out into a panorama of loveliness. On the road to Parliament Hill he passed the spot where Shelley found a starving woman dying in the snow, and took her to Leigh Hunt's house to give her warmth. Near John Masefield's house was the garden where Keats had written his immortal *Ode to a Nightingale*. Hampstead was prodigal of associations, and they stirred the boy's imagination like a trumpet call.

Then followed the long summer term, with its drowsy afternoons, its white flannels, its long evening shadows creeping across the courts, its ices, its innumerable lemonades; everything conspired to make Gordon supremely happy. Scholastically he had at last achieved his great wish of specialising in history; a fine-sounding programme

which actually implied that he would not need to do another stroke of work during his Fernhurst career. Specialising in history was an elastic activity, and might mean a few hours a week in which to read up political economy. It might mean what Prothero made it mean—seven hours in school a week, and the remainder pretending to read history in his study.

The grey and lifeless Finnemore superintended the history, and, like everything else he superintended, it was scandalously neglected. Outhouse people occasionally did a little work; School House men never. Gordon began by taking quite modest privileges. He knew he had heaps of time to enlarge his advantages. He started by doing one prose and one "con" a week, instead of two proses and two "cons" like the rest of the form. He also gave up one Latin construe book and one Greek book. That meant about two hours a day to idle in his study. But he found it quite easy to turn that two into three, and he was well aware that by Christmas his daily hours of indolence would have reached five. Prothero at the present moment was only going into school for divinity and French, and as often as not he told his French master that he was so much occupied with history that he could not come to French at all. Nominally he went into school seven hours a week, actually he very rarely went in more than three.

The method of teaching history at Fernhurst had been the same from time immemorial. Gordon was told to buy *Modern Europe*, by Lodge, price seven shillings and sixpence. He did not, however, put his father to this expense. History specialists in the School House had for years used the same book. It had once belonged to a fabulous Van Hepworth, who had gained a History exhibition at Selwyn somewhere in the nineties.

No one knew anything of this Van Hepworth. His name was on the school boards, but he had never been seen or heard of since he had left Fernhurst for the romantic atmosphere of Cambridge. But he had left behind him a name that will be remembered in the School House as long as history is taught by Finnemore. For on his last day,

in a fit of gratitude, he had left to future historians the legacy of his history notebook. It contained all that Finnemore knew !

Every week Finnemore set three questions to his specialists—to be done with books. He had a stock of these questions, and Van Hepworth had written exhaustive essays on every one of them. All that was needed was to consult the oracle, and then copy out what he had written. Sometimes, by way of a change, Finnemore would think of a new subject. But Gordon would say :

" Oh, sir, I have been reading about Mary de Medici, and am very much interested in her. I wondered if I could do a question on her."

" Of course. I always like you to do what you are interested in. Let me see. I have a nice little question on her : ' Mary de Medici : was she an unmixed evil ? ' An interesting subject which raises quite a lot of points. And I have one more question for you. ' Compare Richelieu and Mazarin,' an interesting little psychological study. I think you will enjoy them."

Then Gordon would have recourse to the unfailing authority, Van Hepworth. Sometimes he felt too slack to copy out the questions at all. On such occasions he would simply read Van Hepworth's essay straight out of the old, battered book.

" I hope you won't mind my reading this to you, but I was in rather a hurry and I doubt if you could quite read my handwriting."

Finnemore would listen with the greatest interest.

" Very nice indeed, Caruthers, very sound attitude to adopt. An essay well worth preserving. You will copy it out neatly, won't you ? "

" Oh yes, sir."

Gordon wanted to institute a Van Hepworth memorial, and put up a plate to him somewhere. But there were many obstacles to this. The Chief might want to know more about him, and the legend had to be kept secret. In the end he contented himself with having the book bound in full morocco, so that it might be preserved for

future generations, for already the cardboard cover had become sadly torn. Where Van Hepworth is now, who knows? This only is certain, that although he has most likely by now lost all clear recollection of Fernhurst and the grey School House studies, yet his name is remembered there to-day, probably with far greater veneration and respect than was ever paid to him during the days of his school career.

> "Let us now praise famous men,
> Men of little showing,
> For their work continueth,
> Deep and long continueth,
> Wide and far continueth, far beyond their knowing."

And so Gordon's scholastic career came to an end. He had reached the "far border town." There would be no need to fret himself about form orders any more. "Strong men might go by and pass o'er him"; he had retired from the fray. While others crammed their brains with obscure interpretations of Æschylus, he lay back reading English poetry and English prose, striving to get a clear hold of the forces that went to produce each movement, and incidentally doing himself far more good than he would have done by binding himself down to the classical regime, which trained boys to imitate, and not to strike out on their own. Gordon had already acquired enough of the taste and sense of form which the classics alone can provide, and which are essential to a real culture. But he was lucky in stopping soon enough to prevent himself being forced into a groove, from which he could only judge new movements by the Ciceronian standards, without grasping the fact that technique and form are merely outward coverings of genius, and not genius in themselves.

To the other delights of this delightful term was added the sudden and unexpected success of Gordon's cricket. For the first fortnight Gordon found himself playing on House and Colts games. But as he gathered runs there with ease, he was soon transplanted to the First Eleven nets, which he thenceforward only left for a brief spell,

after an attack of chicken-pox. For a member of the School Eleven life has nothing better to offer than a summer term. There were usually two matches a week. The team would get off work at ten o'clock, and just as the school was pouring out in break they would stroll leisurely down to the cricket field. Everything, in fact, was carried out leisurely. A wonderful atmosphere of repose hangs over a cricket field in the morning, when the grass is still sparkling with dew, and there is silence and vast emptiness where usually is the sound of shouting and hurrying feet. There was the long luncheon interval, when the members of the Eleven would wander round the field arm in arm, or lounge on the seats lazy and contented. Gordon loved to sit in the pavilion balcony watching the white forms change across between the overs, the red ball bouncing along the grass, the wicket-keeper whip off the bails, the umpire's finger go up. The whole tableau was so unreal, so idealistic. Then the school would come down after lunch with rugs and cushions, and would clamour outside the tuck-shop for ices and ginger beer. Gordon could hardly connect his present existence with the past two years of doubts, uncertainties, wild excitements, hurry, bustle—never a second's peace.

One of his most perfect days was the Hawley match. After a long journey, at the very end of the day they passed through Oxford, and Gordon caught one fleeting glimpse of those wonderful "dreaming spires," rising golden in the dying sun. As the team walked up from Aberford to the school, Tester, who had at last got into the side, came up and took Gordon's arm.

"You know, when I saw Oxford lying out there so peaceful and calm, I thought I had at last reached the end of searching. This was my first view of Oxford; by passing the certificate I didn't need to go up for smalls. Thank God, I am going up there next term. I think I shall forget all my old misgivings in so completely peaceful an atmosphere. I can't shake off the Public School ideas yet; I am all adrift; still, I think it will be all right there."

Gordon wondered indeed how anyone could fail to find

all their dreams realised in so secluded, so monastic a Utopia.

The next two days were supremely happy. Gordon, Lovelace and Foster were put into the same house; and they spent half the night ragging in their old light-hearted fashion. The match resembled most of the other performances of that year's Eleven. The whole side was out for eighty. Gordon hit two fours and was then leg before; Lovelace, with laborious efforts and much use of his pads, made twenty-three and five leg byes. But it was a sorry performance, and Hawley put up over two hundred. Fernhurst went in again; and that day Gordon and Lovelace were sent in first.

It was an amazing performance. Gordon's cricket was, in honest fact, one of the biggest frauds that had ever been inflicted on an opposing side. He had three shots—a cut, a slash shot past cover, and a drive that landed the ball anywhere from mid-wicket to over short-slip. People used to say that he tried each of these shots in rotation. That perhaps was hardly fair; but he invariably cut straight balls and hooked good length balls on the off stump to the on boundary. This evening, at any rate, he was in luck. With terrific violence he beat the Hawley bowling all round the field. Some shots went along the ground, more fell just out of reach of a fielder. It was invigorating but hardly classic cricket. Still, whatever it was, it produced seventy-two runs, while Lovelace had scored three. And after he left Lovelace became still more cautious. A man from Christy's was in at the other end, who had been instructed to keep up his end for an hour. As a matter of fact, they scored exactly two runs between them in about half-an-hour. That two was from a drive from Lovelace past cover.

At such daring Lovelace became much elated.

"Come on, I say, come on. Lots of runs here. Come on."

The Hawley men were very amused. Lovelace took nothing seriously. It was as well that "the Bull" was absent. Once, just as the bowler was rushing up to bowl,

Lovelace flung out his hand and said : " Stop ! Move the screen, please ; your hand is just behind a tree ! "

With great difficulty the screens were moved.

Once he patted the ball a little way down the pitch, and shouted to the batsman at the other end, with hand extended : " Stay ! "

There was some subdued laughter.

Lovelace turned round to the wicket-keeper and said : " Strange as it may seem, I am the worst member of this rotten side, and I am playing for my place. This is the way to keep your place at Fernhurst."

The final achievement was a successful appeal against the light.

The next day it rained in torrents.

" Jolly rotten luck," said Lovelace, " and I was certain for a bat for making my fifty, too."

" Do you think so ? " said Tester. " You know, they don't play to a finish in England. You are thinking of Australian rules."

Commemoration came and went, with its tea-parties, parasols, calf-bound books, sermons and cricket match. The term drew to its close.

" This is the best term I have ever had," said Gordon. " By Jove, we have had some good days."

Yet, of all things, that which remained clearest in his memory was one day early in the term, when he and Lovelace were recovering from chicken-pox. The school had gone for a field day to Salisbury, and they were left behind with Archie Fletcher, who had been ragging Jenks, and had been kept back for punishment, and a quantity of small fry. No work was done. In the morning they all had to go into the big schoolroom and hear Claremont read *Lycidas* and parts of *Comus*.

Claremont really read remarkably well, and Gordon, in an atmosphere of genial tolerance and good humour, was able to get a clearer insight into the real soul of the pedant of the Lower Fifth. For, shorn of his trappings, Claremont was really rather " a dear old fellow." Among books he had found the lasting friendship and consolation that among

his colleagues he had sought for in vain. And as he read *Comus*, in many ways the most truly poetical poem in the English language, Gordon realised how sensitively Claremont's heart was wrought upon by every breath of beauty.

The afternoon they had to themselves. A net was put up on the field, and for an hour or so they beat about, regardless of science and footwork. A relaxation was a good thing now and again. Then they went back to the studies, and in the absence of its owner laid hold of the games study. They had the run of it now, and, with an enormous basket of strawberries before them, played tunes on the gramophone and roared the chorus. As the evening fell, and the lights began to wake, Gordon and Archie stole down to the fried fish shop, strictly out of bounds, and returned with an unsavoury, but none the less palatable, parcel of fried fish and chips.

It was a glorious day; they enjoyed all Fernhurst's privileges with its restrictions removed, and when the notes of *Land of Hope and Glory* proclaimed that the corps was marching up Cheap Street, they considered the return to realities to be almost an intrusion on their isolated peace.

In the last week of the term the Colts played Uphill, and Gordon was still young enough to play for them. "The Bull" went with them, and could not have been kinder. He walked round the ground with Gordon in the interval, as if there had been never any cause of quarrel between them at all. They talked of books as well as cricket; and though "the Bull's" gods were not Gordon's, there was real sympathy between them for an hour. On the way back in the train, Gordon wondered whether, after all, he had not been right at the beginning, when he promised to curb his personality, and merge it into "the Bull's." What good was there in going his own way, in fighting for what he thought right? Buller always had had his own way, and things had gone on all right. Why should he try and alter things? Having realised "the Bull's" faults, should he not make allowance for them, seeing that his virtues so outnumbered his failings? He was

certainly intolerant of any other opinions but his own; but then so was Ferrers, whom Gordon worshipped on the other side idolatry. The pity was that Ferrers was intolerant of the things he hated, while Buller was intolerant of the things he admired. It was all very difficult. For the moment he did not feel ready to come to any decision. He was too happy to trouble himself. "Sufficient for the day were the day's evil things." Let the future reveal itself. He would see how things turned out.

The concert came, with its *Valete* of many memories. The school songs were howled out; hands crossed and swung in *Auld Lang Syne*; the *Carmen* nearly brought the roof down. Lying back in bed, Gordon saw little to regret in the school year that was just ending. Considering he had been second in the batting averages, he thought they might have given him his "Firsts"; but it did not matter very much. There was heaps of time. Three years of fulfilment. Half his school life was over. The threads of his youth had been unravelled at last; and in the coming year they would be woven upon the wonderful loom of youth, with its bright colours, its sunshine and its laughter. As the spring morn flings aside its winter raiment, so he had put off the garb of his wandering adolescence. He was prepared for whatever might come. But he was certain that it was only happiness that was waiting for him. Three years of success in which would be mingled the real poetry of existence. He would not write his poetry on paper; he would write it, as Herod had written it, in every action of his life. His innings was just about to begin.

BOOK IV.—THE WEAVING

"Alba Ligustra cadunt; vaccinia nigra leguntur."

VERGIL.

"Life like an army I could hear advance,
Halting at fewer, fewer intervals."

HAROLD MONRO.

CHAPTER I

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

IT is good to dream; but "Man proposes: God in His time disposes," and Gordon's dream was scattered at its dawn. Hardly a week later a great nation forgot its greatness, and Europe trembled on the brink of war. During those days of awful suspense, when it was uncertain whether England would enter into the contest or not, Gordon could hardly keep still with nervous excitement. When on the Sunday before Bank Holiday J. L. Garvin poured out his warning to the Liberal Government, it seemed for a moment as if they were going to back out.

On the Tuesday Gordon went to the Oval; Lovelace major was playing against Surrey. In the Strand he ran into Ferrers.

"Come on, sir, I am just off to the Oval to see Lovelace's brother bat. Great fellow! Captain of the House my first term."

"Right you are. Come on. There's a bus!"

For hours, or what seemed like hours, two painfully correct professionals pottered about, scoring by ones and

twos. Gordon longed for them to get out. A catch was missed in the slips.

"Surrey are the worst slip-fielding side in England," announced Gordon fiercely. The Oval crowd, always so ferociously partisan, moved round him uneasily.

At last a roar went up, as Hitch knocked the leg stump flying out of the ground. Then Lovelace came in. He looked just as he had looked on the green Fernhurst sward, only perhaps a little broader. He was wearing the magenta and black of the School House scarf. He was an amateur of the R. E. Foster type—wrist shots past cover, and an honest off-drive.

A change came over the play at once. In his first over he hit two fours. There was a stir round the ground. His personality was as strong as ever.

A boy ran on the field with a telegram for him.

"I bet that means he has got to join his regiment," said Gordon, "and it also means we are going to fight."

Lovelace shoved the telegram into his pocket, and went on batting just as if nothing had happened, just as if he did not realise that this was his last innings for a very long time. He hit all round the wicket.

At last a brilliant piece of stumping sent him back to the pavilion amid a roar of cheering.

"My word, Mr Ferrers, there goes the finest man Fernhurst has turned out since I have been there. And, my word, it will be a long time before we turn out another like him. There will be nothing to see now he has gone."

They wandered out into the Kennington Road, excited, feverish. They had lunch at Gatti's, went into *Potash and Perlmutter*, and came out after the first act.

"This is no time for German Jews," said Ferrers, "let's try the Hippodrome."

It was an expensive day. They rushed from one thing to another. The strain was intolerable. After supper they went to the West End Cinema, and there, just before closing-time, a film, in which everyone was falling into a dirty duck-pond for no ostensible reason, was suddenly

stopped, and there appeared across the screen the flaming notice:

ENGLAND HAS DECLARED WAR ON GERMANY

GOD SAVE THE KING!

There was dead silence for a moment. Then cheer upon cheer convulsed the house. The band struck up the National Anthem. The sequel to the tragedy of the duck-pond was never known.

"Glorious! Glorious!" said Ferrers, as they staggered out into the cool night air. "A war is just what we want. It will wake us up from sleeping; stir us into life; inflame our literature. There's a real chance now of sweeping away the old outworn traditions. In a great fire they will all be burnt. Then we can build afresh. I wish I could go and fight. Damn my heart! To think of all the running it stood at Oxford; and then suddenly to give way. My doctor always tells me to be careful. If I could go, by God, I would have my shot at the bloody Germans; but still I'll do something at Fernhurst. Stoics, you know; Army class English. How old are you? Sixteen! We shall have you for two years yet. This war is going to save England and everything! Glorious!"

The flaring lights of Leicester Square, the tawdry brilliance of Piccadilly seemed to burst into one volcano of red splendour; a thousand cannons spitting flame; a thousand eyes bright with love of England. In a state of sub-conscious delirium the swaying Tube swept Gordon home to the starlit calm of Hampstead.

Throughout the long summer holidays this feeling of rejoicing sustained Gordon's heart. He saw an age rising out of these purging fires that would rival the Elizabethan. He saw a second Marlowe and a second Webster. His soul was aflame with hope. He had no doubt as to the result. Even the long retreat from Mons, with its bitter list of casualties, failed to terrorise him. Half the holidays he

spent in Wychtown, a little Somersetshire village, and his enthusiasm at one time took the form of buying bundles of newspapers, which he distributed at the cottages, so as to keep everyone in touch with the state of affairs. At one time he thought of going round discussing the war with some of the villagers; but he soon abandoned this project. He began with an aged man who said he had fought at Dettingen.

"Well, Mr Cavendish, and what do you think of the war this morning."

"Lor' bless you, things beant what they were in my young days. At Dettingen, now, we did things a bit different-like. But these 'ere Germans, now, they be getting on right well. Be they for us?"

After this Gordon decided that the natural simplicity of the yokel was proof against anything he might have to say. He pitied electioneering agents.

A week before the beginning of term he received two letters. The first was from Lovelace, who had just got a nomination to Sandhurst, and would not return to school next term. The other was from Hunter, saying that he had got a commission in the Dorsets.

"*Well, Caruthers, old fellow,*" he added, "*this means that you will be captain of the House. I had greatly looked forward to being captain myself, and had thought out a good many new ideas. But of course all that has got to go now, and I don't intend to try and pass off my theories on you; you'll probably have many more than I had, and a good deal better ones. All I can say is that I wish the very best of luck to you and to the House. I have no doubt you'll do jolly well. Good luck.*"

Gordon sat silent for a long while. Sorrow at losing Lovelace strove with the wild joy of reaching his heart's desire so soon. Finally all other emotions were lost in the overflowing sense of relief that his days of waiting for achievement were over. He had found the Golden Fleece. Nothing now remained for him but to enjoy the laurels

he had won. He saw the future stretching out before him. He saw two glorious years of leadership, in which he would carry the House on to its rightful position of undisputed pre-eminence. He had the strength, and he had the power. He had, thanks to the influence of Tester and Ferrers, broken off the old shackles, the eternal prospect of impending rows. He was safe, secure. Not for a moment did he doubt. He imagined his last term crowning all others; the batting cup his own; the senior cricket the House's; all the football cups shimmering on the shelf; he himself supreme, the figure-head. Then he would pass rose-garlanded out of the lighted halls, his ears half-deafened with applause, and take his place among the defenders of his country. Afterwards, it did not matter. He might be shot, he might come through; but whatever happened nothing would be able to shatter the splendid memory of the two years of triumph, the years that were now lying at his feet! The war had awakened England from her slumber of a hundred years; the old tattered clothes had fallen off her; she was now a queen in a rainbow garment. And Gordon, from the depth of his heart, poured forth his thanksgiving to whatever gods might be, that the great hour had come while he was in the flush of youth, when he could himself drink the cup of glory to its dregs.

In this state of enthusiasm Gordon returned to Fernhurst.

At Waterloo everyone was talking at the top of his voice.

"Is it true Akerman has left?"

"Yes; got a commission in the Middlesex."

"Good Lord! that'll mean Gregory captain."

"Hunter has left, too, I hear."

"Has he?"

"Caruthers will be captain of the House, then."

Broken sentences were wafted like strange music to Gordon's ears. He felt that the eyes of those who once had been his equals looked at him with a sort of Oriental admiration, in which there lurked traces of fear.

He found himself addressed with more respect. One or two people came up to congratulate him. The green flag waved. The train moved majestically westward, and

his reign had begun. He did not feel the slightest tremor of nervousness. He remembered Hunter saying at the end of last term that it was rather ticklish work being captain of the House. Was it? To Gordon it seemed no more than the inevitable entrance into a kingdom which was his by right of conquest.

The Eversham road swept in its broad curve up to the Abbey, black with countless moving figures. Gordon slowly walked up to the House. It was the privilege of School House prefects to enter by a small gate near the masters' common room. Haughtily he rang the bell. A wizened old lady opened the door, bowing with a "Hope you had a good holiday, sir." It was the first sensation of power.

Round the notice-board in the changing-room a huge crowd had collected; Gordon just murmured "Thank you," and two or three Eton collars moved aside to give him room. What a change! All the giants of the former generation had gone. Betteridge had, at the express request of the Chief, come back for one term. But he alone remained. Gordon was fifth in the House; and, good Lord, that amazing ass Rudd was a prefect, and second in the House! He and Gordon had a double dormitory on the lower landing. The number of boys in the House had sunk to sixty-two, rather a desolating thought for House matches.

The Chief was not in his study. Gordon dropped a health certificate on his table, and gave instructions to one Morgan, a round-faced, ruddy youth, to shove his bag into his dormitory. Then he wandered over to the games study. And so this study was going to be his! He had often sat there with Carter; but he had always felt himself rather an excrescence, rather out of it. But now it was his. He pictured the evenings after a hard game of football, sitting in front of the fire; the long mornings when he was supposed to be preparing history for Finnemore, spent in this atmosphere of luxurious calm. There was nothing so conducive to a well-balanced mind as artistic surroundings. He saw how he would furnish the room. In the broad window he

would hang two bookshelves for his smaller books. On each side of the fireplace there was also room for a bookshelf. Then, standing against the wooden partition that jutted out into the room would be his large oak bookcase for the heavy volumes. Of course he would repaper the room, and a new carpet was a necessity. He went over to the porter's lodge to give his instructions.

He had already decided to ask Foster to share the study with him. Foster would be captain of cricket next summer. They would get on well together. Foster never quarrelled with anyone; and it would be a suitable combination. He met Foster by the eight-ten train from Exeter, and informed him of the fact. He seemed quite pleased.

When prayers came, and Gordon stood under the mantelpiece behind the arm-chair where the captain of the House sat, and looked down at the row of new boys at the day-room table, it seemed incredible to him that he had ever been like that. And yet it was only three years ago since he had sat there, dazed and frightened. He had learnt a good deal since then, had done a good many things he would wish undone, but he had reached his goal at last. And it is the result that counts.

Prayers were ended. Gordon sat back, his hands resting on the arms of his big oak chair. The Chief came round, shaking hands.

"Caruthers, Foster and Davenport, you might come and speak to me for a moment after you have finished your supper."

That was not long. No one had ever been known to touch any of the first-night soup; Gordon had often wondered what happened to it. There was so much of it, and all wasted.

The Chief greeted them with his invariable fluttering smile.

"I suppose you know what I want you for, don't you?"

"I think I can guess, sir," said Foster.

"Well, you see, owing to the war, Kitchener had to call up his reserves, so I have had to call up mine. Neither of you three would, I think, in the ordinary course of events

have become prefects this term. But as it is, I am sure you will all do quite well; and remember that being a prefect does not merely consist in the privilege of being late for breakfast. Some of you, who may very likely have views of your own on certain subjects, must try and make them conform with mine. You see, we must all try to work together, and I am always ready to give any of you advice if I am able to, and of course——"

At this moment there came the discordant sounds that proclaimed the arrival of the last train from town. Gordon could imagine some wretched new boy huddled underneath the stairs, ignorant and timid.

Rudd burst in with a health certificate and outside came the babble of voices. "I must go and see Chief . . . Health certificate . . . Confirmation classes . . . Going to specialise in stinks."

It was clear that the Chief was to have a hard time for the next twenty minutes interviewing all these candidates for a satisfactory division of labour.

"Well, I think that is all just now, thank you, Caruthers."

He gave them a nod of dismissal. They filed out into the passage, black with its crowd of clamouring applicants.

It was not until the next day, however, that Gordon fully realised the change that had come over Fernhurst. Nearly all the bloods had left. Gregory was still there, but he had sent his papers in, and expected to be gazetted in a week or so, and of the Fifteen of the year before he was the only remaining colour. Two members of the Second Fifteen remained: one because he was only seventeen, the other, Akerman's younger brother, because he was going to be a medical student and was not allowed to take a commission by the War Office.

The staff also had undergone several changes. Ferrers was practically the only master under thirty. The rest had all taken commissions, and their places were filled by greybeards and bald-heads, long since past their prime. It was a case of extreme youth face to face with extreme age.

"There will be some fun this term," prophesied Archie

Fletcher, for whom the immediate future stretched out into a long series of colossal "rags."

Rogers was imperially himself. The Corps was, of course, to be allowed considerably more time this term. There were two parades a week, one a company drill on Friday, the other a field day on Wednesday. Besides this, between twelve-thirty and lunch there would be section and platoon drill every other day. Rogers imagined that O.T.C. work would shortly become more important and more popular than football; he saw himself taking the position once held by Buller. On the strength of this alluring prospect he bought a new uniform.

For the first few days life was admirably disorganised. The time-table worked out all wrong. Gregory got gazetted; and Akerman, on becoming captain, forgot the numbers of the football grounds, thus causing endless and hilarious confusion. No one quite knew what was happening. But everyone was entirely happy, very excited, and vaguely garrulous about "my cousin at the front," and "how the war has changed things."

Gordon found that his new position brought with it certain other honours. In the Corps, for instance, where for three years he had so tempered slackness with insolence as to make him the worst private in the company, he suddenly found himself a lance-corporal, and was put in charge of a section. He was elected to the Dolts Literary Society, under the placid autocracy of Claremont, who called them his "stolidi." But nothing showed more clearly the change wrought by the war than the fact that Gordon was nominated to the Games Committee, before which august body hardly six months ago he had cut a singularly inglorious figure. It was a strange irony.

In the School House every prefect was allowed four fags, so as Foster and Gordon were both prefects, the games study had a goodly crowd of menials. For the most part they were simple, insignificant, Eton-collared mortals, who flitted round the room after breakfast with dusters, and at various other times of the day came in to see after the fire. Gordon took little notice of them. He scarcely

knew their names. Foster had made out a list of the days on which each fag was on duty; one, Hare, was put in charge, and when anything went wrong, Hare was considered responsible and beaten. After two such castigations the excellence of the fagging was maintained at an unusually high standard. If Gordon wanted anything he went to the top of the stairs and bawled out "Redman." He did not know or care who Redman fagged for; as a matter of fact, he fagged for Davenport; but Gordon had taken a dislike to him, and thought it was as well to keep him in order. It was all very unfair; but as Mr Lunn has said: "There is no trade union of fags."

The first month of the term passed by in a whirl of excitement. Corps work, which had once been so dull, became of the intensest interest; the field days by Babylon Hill provided real excitement, in spite of the prolixity of Rogers's subsequent summary of the day's work. There were going to be very few football matches; but "uppers" were played with all the old keenness, and there was keen competition for the last few places in the scrum. A series of Junior House matches also produced some excellent games. Ferrers wrote a long article to *The Country* on "The Public Schools and the War," which bubbled over with enthusiasm.

Gordon found authority a pleasant thing. There were, of course, bound to be little worries, but they were very transient. The new boys caused him a certain amount of trouble. They never would take the trouble to look to see if they were posted for House games. The result was that as often as not the House found itself playing with only six forwards. Gordon made a speech to the House on the subject. The very next day Golding, a most wretched-looking specimen, failed to turn up on a House game.

Gordon gave him a lecture on the insignificance of the new boy and the importance of games.

"This sort of thing can't go on," he said, using the formula that every prefect has used since the day prefects were first made. "If it did, we might find everyone cutting House games and going off to pick-ups! What would happen then?"

Golding was far too frightened to have any views on the subject.

"Well, I shall have to beat you."

Gordon led the way to the empty space by the cloisters where roll was called.

"Bend over there!"

Golding showed a natural reluctance to do anything of the sort.

"No, right down; and lift up your coat."

Gordon gave him a fairly hard stroke. Golding squealed "Oh!" and rose, holding his trousers, and looking round fretfully. Gordon's heart melted. After all, this was a new kid, and a pretty poor specimen at that.

The next shot was very gentle.

The sequel reached Gordon three days later. Golding had gone back down to the day-room. Rudd was taking hall, which was, of course, an excuse for everyone to talk.

"How many?" asked several voices. "Did he hurt?"

"Oh, only one and a half," announced Golding, puffed out with pride. "First hardly hurt me at all, and the second one was quite a misfire."

This was rather a surprise to those who remembered Gordon's driving power. Golding was thought rather a "lad" after all.

Gordon, however, soon dispelled this illusion. A week later he went down to the House game in which Golding was playing and cursed him roundly all the afternoon with perfect justice. After tea he gave him six for slacking: and all delusions about Golding's bravery were immediately dispelled.

"Damned little tick," said Gordon. "He made such a fuss that I let him off lightly, and then he goes down to the day-room and makes out I am a wreck. Collins, I charge thee, put away compassion! It does not pay with these degenerates."

There is nothing more interesting to the artist than watching a thing grow under one's hand. And Gordon, who had the ambition of the artist in embryo, was thoroughly engrossed in the training of his House sides. A-K Junior

was certainly a most promising side ; it beat Claremont's by twenty points, and Rogers's by over fifty. There was, of course, no cup for these matches. All the real House matches were in the Easter term, but still great interest was taken in them. Buller's, Christy's and the School House A-K were obviously the best ; and some exciting games were expected.

Morgan captained the side, and was easily the best man in it, but among the lesser lights there was a great display of energy, much of it misplaced. The worst offender was Bray. To watch him play was to witness a gladiatorial display of frightfulness. His fists flew about like a flail, his legs were everywhere. On the whole he did more damage to his own side than to his opponents. And the amount of energy he wasted every game in hacking the bodies of any who got in his way must have been very exhausting. Gordon had to speak to him almost severely once or twice.

In the game against Rogers's, Bray nearly got sent off the field. There had been a tight scrum which had more or less collapsed. The whistle blew. Jenks had been persuaded to referee.

" Now then, form up properly there."

When the two scrums assorted themselves, Bray was discovered about five yards from the ball, sitting on the head of a wretched, fat, unwashed product of Rogers's, punching him violently and ejaculating after each punch :

" Damn you ! Damn you ! Damn you ! "

Jenks looked very fierce.

" Now then, you stupid fellows. If you go on like that, I shall have to report you to the Headmaster, and you know what that will mean."

Bray looked a little frightened, and for the future devoted his energies to the football and not the footballers, to the distinct advantage of the side.

But Gordon began to find that the more his interest increased in House games, the less interest he took in uppers and Fifteen puntabouts. He was always wanting to go and see how his House was getting on. As soon as the first

keenness wore off he found the interminable "uppers," totally unrelieved by the excitement of matches, amazingly dull. Indeed, the whole school side was beginning to grow weary. Every Monday and Thursday there was a punt-about. Every Tuesday and Saturday there was the same game—First Fifteen *v.* Second Fifteen—with one or two masters, such as Christy, who were no longer as young as they had been. The result was invariably the same; the First Fifteen won by forty points, and were cursed by "the Bull" for not winning by sixty. No one could possibly enjoy such monotony. Every week the business became more unpopular.

"The Bull" stamped up and down with a whistle in his hand.

"I never saw such slackness. What good do you imagine you men will be in the trenches, if you can't last out a short game of rugger like this? I don't know what the school is coming too!"

The side, which had never been good, got worse daily. As a captain, the younger Akerman was an absolute nonentity. Buller was captain of the side in everything but name.

"You know, Foster," said Gordon one Saturday evening after a more than usually dreary performance, "these uppers are getting about the ruddy limit."

"Have you taken all this time to find that out?" growled Foster. "I used to like footer once. Last year we had a good time on those Colts games. Of course the old buffalo lost his hair a good deal, but the games were level at any rate. I can see no sort of fun in winning every time by forty points. Why can't we have pick-up games, so as to get level sides."

"I suppose 'the Bull' wants to get the side working together."

"Perhaps he does; but why, if there are going to be no matches till half-way through November? The Uphill match is four weeks off, and till then we have to continue this silly farce twice a week. And, after all, it does not teach us defence in the least. Our three-quarter men have

not to do any collaring. If we run up against a side that is any use at attack, we shall be hopelessly dished."

"I think we shall be dished anyhow. And I am damned if I care much. Buller has knocked all the keenness out of me, and the rest of the side say the same thing. Do you know, I actually look forward to Corps parade day."

"The same with me. I am fed to death with footer."

"Still we are having a jolly good time off the field, after all."

"Are we?"

"Oh, yes; we are prefects; we haven't got to do any work, and it's awfully interesting coaching the kids."

Foster looked dubiously at him. He was coaching no sides and the term was for him particularly rotten. He also had to do some work for his Sandhurst exam. next term.

But Gordon's crown was as yet too fresh to feel the tarnishing damp of disappointment.

Another new interest was provided by Betteridge's invitation to help him in the editing of the school magazine. Amateur journalism is an excellent amusement for the young. After tea Gordon and Betteridge would sit scheming out the contents of the next number. Nearly every day brought something. Usually some contemporary school magazine; occasionally a contribution would arrive. Gordon would open the envelope.

"What's this?" Betteridge would say.

"Oh, some rot by Rogers about O.T.C. instruction."

"Heavens! that'll mean sending up to town for a fresh supply of capital I's. Anything else?"

"Yes; an article by Burgess on 'The Higher Æsthetics.'"

"What is it like?"

"Same as usual. A lot of platitudes masquerading as epigrams."

"Shove it in the waste-paper basket. We must keep down the Buller's upstarts."

Betteridge had a deep-rooted objection to "the swine across the road." And besides, the object of the magazine under his management was to reflect School House thought

as far as possible. There were only a few things that the House could keep to itself. The magazine was one of them.

October went by with its red-gold leaves and amber sunlight. November swept in bringing a procession of long evenings and flickering lights. The first boom of the war fever had died down and Fernhurst lay weak and exhausted. The Fifteen played listlessly, Upper followed Upper. Puntabout followed puntabout. No one cared who was in the side. Foster was left out—and thanked heaven!

"I am about sick of being cursed off my feet, and told I shall be no good in the trenches because I miss my passes. 'The Bull' has gone war-mad."

Gordon *had* to keep in the side; it would not do for the House captain to get a reputation for slackness. His play lacked its old fire and dash, but was still good enough to earn him his place. He knew he was going off; that he was not nearly so good as he had been the year before; the thought worried him. But still A-K Junior was doing very well.

One Saturday evening there came the sound of thumping feet down the passage, someone banged himself against the door, and a well-known voice was shouting:

"Hullo, Caruthers, my lad!"

Gordon swung round to find Mansell, with out-stretched hand, looking magnificent in the top-boots and spurs of the R.F.A.

"Come in. Sit down. By Jove! this is like old times. I must call up Archie! Archie! . . . Here's someone to see you."

Mansell was just the same as he had been a year ago, only a little older, a little stronger, a little more the man of the world. He was full of stories; how his men had nearly mutinied because they thought their separation allowance insufficient; how he had chased deserters half across England; how he had taken the pretty waitress at the café to the music hall.

"It's life, that's what it is! I never knew what life was till I went to Bournemouth. Oh, my God, we do have a time! Damned hard work, of course, but we do have a

time in the evenings! My lord, I nearly put my foot in it the other night. I saw the devil of a smart girl walking down the street, and I could have sworn I knew her. I went up and said: 'Coming for a stroll?' O Lord, you should have seen her turn round. I thought she would fetch a policeman. And we have a jolly good footer side, too. We fairly smashed the S.W.B. last week. Oh, it's grand. But, still, I suppose you are not having a bad time here. It's good to see you lads again."

On the next day Mansell stood an enormous tea in the games study. Everyone of any importance came in. The gramophone played, songs were sung. Never was there seen so much food before. Mansell seemed like a Greek god who had for a moment descended to earth to reveal a glimpse of what Olympus was like.

Gordon went down and saw him off by the five-forty-five.

"My word! I envy you, Mansell," he said.

"Oh, I shouldn't. I often wish I was back again in the House, you know. All those old days with Claremont and Trundle and the footer, and all that. Oh, we had a darned fine time. Make the most of it while you've got it."

As Gordon walked back alone, he had the unpleasant sensation of feeling that the best of life was over, that the days of ragging, of footer, of Claremont, of Trundle had gone beyond recall. All the friends of his first term, Hunter, Lovelace, Mansell, they were all gone, scattered to the winds. He alone remained, and with a sudden pain he wondered whether he had not outlived his day, whether, like Tithonus, he was taking more than he had been meant to take. But then, as he walked through the small gateway, and majestically wandered up the Chief's drive, he reflected that, even if his splendour was a lonely one, without the laughter and comradeship he could have wished for, yet it was none the less a splendour. He must hold on. As Mansell had said, he must make the best of it while he had it.

A small boy came up nervously.

"Please, Caruthers, may I have leave off games for a week? I have just had a bad foot."

"Did Matron say so?"

"Oh yes."

"All right, then."

He walked up the stairs to his study, smiling to himself. What had he been fretting himself about? He had his power. He had the things he had wanted.

> *"Is it not brave to be a king?*
> *Is it not passing brave to be a king*
> *And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"*

Marlowe had been right, Marlowe with the pagan soul that loved material things, glitter and splendour, crowns and roses, red lips and gleaming arms.

> *"A god is not so glorious as a king . . .*
> *To ask and have, command and be obeyed."*

And there was no doubt he was a king. He must make the best of his kingdom while he held it.

CHAPTER II

SETTING STARS

But the same atmosphere of monotonous depression that overhung football soon began to affect the military side of school life as well. At first there had been so much novelty. The substitution of platoon drill for the old company routine, the frequent field days all led to keenness. But even the most energetic get weary of doing exactly the same thing three times a week. There are only three different formations in platoon drill, which anyone could learn in half-an-hour; and the days were long past when Gordon's extraordinary commands would form his platoon into an impossible rabble that could only be extricated by the ungrammatical but effective command that School House section commanders had used from the first day of militarism: "As you did ought."

Those days were over. No mistakes. For thirty-five minutes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday the School House platoon would move round the courts in lifeless and perfect formation. As a change they would do some musketry exercises. Occasionally Morgan dropped his rifle; otherwise the same air of inert faultlessness pervaded all proceedings.

And after a while the School began to suspect that the field days were conducted mainly to satisfy Rogers's inordinate conceit. His house had always the advantage. The limit of endurance was reached one day early in November, when Rogers took his house out to defend Babylon Hill against the rest of the corps.

The attack was really rather brilliant. Babylon Hill overlooks the country for miles. There was a splendid field of fire. It was a boiling hot day. Rogers's men lay

happily on the hill firing spasmodically at the khaki figures crawling up the long valley. Their position was almost impregnable.

Early in the proceedings Ferrers, who was conducting the attack, realised the situation, and sent Betteridge with the School House platoon on an enormous detour to bring in a flank attack. If successful the School House platoon would be quite sufficient to wipe out the defence, and Rogers would never notice their loss, as they were sent off at a moment when the attack was crossing some dead ground.

Forlorn hopes occasionally come off. This time, by a marvellous fluke, at the very moment when the attack surged over the crest of the hill, Betteridge's exhausted platoon, with shouts and cheers, burst into Rogers's flank. There was not the slightest doubt that the defence had been utterly cut to pieces.

For a minute or two Rogers stood looking perplexed at the sea of enemies. Then with customary urbanity he told Ferrers to form up his men and sit them on the ground, while he should give his impression on the day's work.

"I think the attack was quite satisfactory. Of course, it stood little chance against the well-organised defence for which I myself was in a way responsible. I believe most of the forces would have been destroyed coming up the hill. But I think the day had a good effect on the morale of the troops. Now morale——" He enlarged on the qualities of morale and discipline for about ten minutes, and concluded with the following courteous reference to the School House flanking movement :—

"I could not clearly discern what those persons were doing who came up on my left. They would have been entirely wiped out. I thought it rather silly myself."

A contemptuous titter broke from the School House platoon, in which amusement and annoyance were equally mixed.

"What is the good of trying at all ?" said Gordon at tea that night. "There were we, sweating over ploughed fields, banging through fences, racing up beastly paths, and

then that mouthing prelate says 'rather silly'! What's the use of trying?"

"There is none," said Betteridge. "I am going to conduct this platoon in future on different lines. 'Evil be thou my good,' as the lad Milton said. We will be unorthodox, original and rebellious."

And so military enthusiasm went tumbling down, to take its place among the illusions that were being so fast shattered in this world of change.

Corps parade and uppers became equally dull and monotonous, and the House sought for a way of instilling life into their dull activities. They could not, of course, play the fool with football. "The Bull" was too big a man. Although he did not know it, the things he had given his life to were falling in ruins about his head. The war had taken the life out of the old order, and the school was growing tired of the domination of games. The twilight of the gods had come. Many were beginning to agree with Ferrers, who was shouting for a breaking of the old bonds. "The Bull" knew nothing of this. To him the old was still the good. There was something splendid in his loyalty to old dreams. He trampled among his broken toys, king of his nursery to the last.

Rogers, on the contrary, had never been a king, and it was by no means impossible to bring his rule into ridicule. A few days later, Gordon and Rudd were walking up Cheap Street, when in a boot-shop they saw displayed a wondrous collection of coloured silk shoe-laces.

"Does anyone really wear those things?" said Gordon.

"I suppose so," said Rudd, "or they wouldn't show them."

"They are certainly most amazing."

They stood looking at them as one would look at a heathen god. Then suddenly Gordon clutched Rudd's sleeve.

"A notion! My word, a notion! Let's buy some pairs and wear them at platoon drill to-morrow."

Gordon was about to burst in to the shop when Rudd detained him.

"Steady, man, this is a great idea. Let's buy enough for the whole platoon. It will be a gorgeous sight! Let's fetch Betteridge."

Flinging prefectorial dignity to the winds, they rushed down to the studies.

"Betteridge, you've got to let us draw upon the House funds for a good cause."

They poured out the idea. Betteridge was wildly enthusiastic. For six shillings they bought forty pairs of coloured laces.

At twelve-thirty next morning a huge crowd lined up under the lindens to watch the School House parade. Rumour had already flown round.

It was a noble spectacle. Each section wore a different coloured shoe-lace. Gordon's wore pale blue, Rudd's pink, Foster's green, and Collins's orange. Everyone was shaking with laughter. Betteridge formed the platoon up in line facing the School House dormitories; sooner or later Rogers would pass by on his way from the common room. At last he was sighted turning the corner of the Chief's drive. Half the school had assembled by the gates.

"Private Morgan," shouted Betteridge, "fall out and do up your shoe-lace.

"Remainder—present ARMS!"

Rogers was far too self-satisfied and certain of his own importance to see that the demonstration was meant for him. But the school saw it, and so did certain members of the staff, who made everything quite clear to Rogers that afternoon. Finally, the Chief learnt of the affair. Betteridge got a lecture on military discipline and on prefectorial dignity. But a good many of the younger masters thoroughly enjoyed the rag, and the story of the coloured shoe-laces is still recounted in common room, when Rogers has made himself unusually tedious about his own virtues and his cleverness in scoring off his enemies.

CHAPTER III

ALBA LIGUSTRA

The Tonford match was a sad travesty of Fernhurst football. The school lost by over forty points. Gordon got his "Seconds," in company with nearly the entire Fifteen. He was not very elated. These things had lost their value. Still, it was as well to have them.

The school authorities then came to the conclusion that the expense of travelling was too great during war-time. The Dulbridge match was scratched.

The Fifteen continued to play uppers. There was nothing to train for. There was no chance of there being any matches, but the same routine went on. The junior house matches were nearly over. A-K and Buller's were in the final. There was every prospect of an exciting game. The School House side went into training. Gordon talked about nothing else in the hall. He spent whole evenings sitting with the cheery, imperturbable Morgan devising schemes. Everyone wanted to see Buller's routed.

And then the day came. On a bright November afternoon, with a sharp wind blowing, a drying ground and ideal conditions, the House were beaten by thirty-seven points to nil. It was a lamentable performance. There was no fire or dash in the side. Morgan made heroic but vain attempts to instil some flash of life into them. The collaring was pitiable. No one fell on the ball.

That evening Gordon had the whole side up into his study and cursed them.

"This house has always had the reputation of playing the hardest football in the school. We have been beaten a good many times, sometimes by over fifty points, but we have always played hard for the Thirds. Two years ago

we put up a magnificent fight, though we had a side that was absurdly weak on paper. Last year we won the Thirds, and nearly won the Two Cock. You people to-day, with an excellent side on paper, flung away the game by slack, rotten football. It was a disgrace to the House. If that is the sort of way the House is going to play in the future, we shall never win another match. It was simply awful, and I hope you are damned well ashamed of yourselves."

All the things Gordon had cared for seemed upon the razor-edge of destruction. This first failure was ominous. For three years he had worked to one end. It had been his perpetual dream to lead the House to victory. Others had led her some of the way. Now apparently he was powerless to do anything. And yet he remembered "the Bull" telling him he had influence and personality. What use were they if they could not win matches? And then in the wild, ungoverned tempest of his rage he swore that, whatever happened, he would not waste himself. He would not bow down before fate. If the House could not obtain supremacy, it should at least obtain independence. The House should not, under his rule, slip into the easy path of mediocrity. It should still be a power in the school. All he needed was opportunity; and just at this very time the sword of chance was put into his hand.

One Sunday after morning chapel Foster and Gordon and Collins were sitting in the games study, when Betteridge came in with the air of one who has great things to announce. He sat down on the edge of the table.

"You know," he said at last, "'the Bull' is really a bit of an ass."

"Good Lord! man," drawled Foster, "if you have got nothing better to tell us than that, for heaven's sake get out. We have known that for a considerable time."

"Listen, my children," said Betteridge. "The mighty man has just summoned me to his study. He was all bubbling over with some new scheme about voluntary gym. for the Sixth."

"I say, I hope you didn't encourage him, did you?"

asked Gordon anxiously. Exemption from Swedish drill was one of the Sixth's most cherished privileges.

"Not exactly. But he did most of the talking. You see, apparently, as the junior house matches and the school matches are over, he is afraid the school may not get enough exercise, so he wants the Sixth and V. A to do voluntary gym. three times a week on days when we don't do platoon drill."

"Good Lord! is that all?"

"Not quite. He wants me to get the names of all those who are willing to go. Apparently he is rather counting on us, as we have drill the same days as Christy's and James's. And as there are only two men in James's above V. B, and four in Christy's, it will be rather a mangy squad unless we roll up in force. He seems quite assured of a good muster roll from his house, and Rogers's and Claremont's."

"So I should imagine," said Gordon. "Voluntary compulsion seems rather a speciality among the outhouses. But, look here, you haven't let us in for this, have you? Because, if so, you are really a bit of a rotter."

"Oh no; I have dealt full generously by you. I said I couldn't promise anything. But I promised I would go round canvassing. I had to break the news to him that I shouldn't be there myself owing to impending exams. He didn't enthuse a bit."

"No; and he will enthuse a jolly sight less in a day or two," said Gordon. "Foster, a bit of paper. Thank you."

He began to write out a notice.

"How does this strike you? 'Owing to the proximity of the boxing competition, there will be sparring practice in the changing-room at twelve-thirty on days when there is no platoon drill.'"

"Behold a second Machiavelli," said Betteridge.

"And I think we will date this for Saturday, so that if anyone makes a fuss we can point to it as a previous arrangement. Now, Betteridge, collect your gymnasium enthusiasts."

As the greater portion of the House learnt boxing, there

was considerable difficulty in getting anyone for the gym. squad. But after some gentle persuasion, Betteridge, with the air of one who has overcome great difficulties, was able to inform Buller that Rudd thought he might be able to come once a week, and Davenport would also drop in occasionally.

As Gordon had expected, he received a summons from "the Bull" in second hall.

"Caruthers, er, sit down, will you—it's about this gym. business. You see, I think it would be a good thing for the Sixth and V. A to do some exercises; they do a lot of it in the New Army. Very good thing, and I wish your house had sent some more. Don't you think you could persuade them? I asked the heads of houses to see into this matter, as I didn't want it athletic at all, but perhaps Betteridge has hardly pressed the point. Don't you think you might use your influence, Caruthers?"

Gordon was sorely tempted to give way. "The Bull" was so decent about it all. He did not seem to realise that any opposition was being raised. Why cause more trouble? Two lines of Tennyson came back to him:

> *"Musing upon the little lives of men*
> *And how they mar that little by their feuds";*

and then he saw that he had to go on. The House had taken up an attitude; it would be a betrayal if he went back upon them now.

"Well, sir, you see, at great inconvenience to ourselves we have decided to have some boxing classes then; and there is no other time to have them."

"But don't you think in a case like this you might cancel the boxing?"

"For gym., sir? Surely boxing is much more use than gym. And besides, sir, the competitions are so close."

"My good boy, can't you see it's for Fernhurst I am doing this? Surely the school is more important than the House."

"Yes, sir; but I thought the whole object of this was to train those in the Sixth and V. A. And if my house have

already got a scheme for training, surely that is all that is needed. And, after all, isn't it voluntary, sir ? "

" I can't understand you, Caruthers. You are all for your house against the rest of the school. Why must you always try to split away from the rest ? Don't you care for your school at all ? I don't know what I have done to put you up against me. I have tried to be just to you. . . . Well, this is the last time I shall ask you to do a keen thing for Fernhurst ; you are too engrossed in your egotism to see big. That's all."

Gordon walked back to the House rather depressed. He liked " the Bull " ; he couldn't help liking him, in spite of the way he infuriated him at times. He would like to be friends with him ; he thought " the Bull " wanted to be friends with him. And yet he began to realise that, as long as he was at Fernhurst, it was impossible for them to be friends. " The Bull " wanted to pull every string. He managed to do so in the school at large. But the House had always clung to its independence. It was a clash of personalities. It had always been the same. He remembered the rows between Lovelace and " the Bull." Those two were great friends now. Perhaps in a few years he too——

" Hullo ! " came the voice of Foster. " Had a pleasant chat ? "

" Oh, ripping. The gym. scheme will cease as far as we are concerned. I am afraid it will be rather a disappointment to Davenport and Rudd."

Next day the House were laughing at the way Caruthers had scored off " the Bull." As Gordon walked past the changing-room he heard someone say :

" Well, thank God, we have at last got a House captain who will stick up for our rights. Some ' lad,' is Caruthers."

" Victory is sweet after the stress of the laborious days," murmured Gordon, as he strolled down to hall.

But this triumph was only a watery gleam of sunlight. The dull drab monotony soon set in again : the war had altered so much. Everything that the Public School

system had stood for seemed in the melting-pot. In a way this was good. Ferrers was amazingly optimistic about it; but for Gordon "the pillar'd firmament was rottenness." All the things he had worked for became without value. Once games had been the pervading influence in his life; during the last year, it is true, poetry and art had claimed much of his allegiance, but for all that his belief in games had not been shaken. And now he found it hard to stimulate any interest in them, except where the House was concerned; and he realised that then it was the House that he cared for, not the game itself. As he lay back in his arm-chair in the evenings it all became clear to him. He saw that for years generation after generation of Fernhurstians had worshipped at the altar of a little tin god. He saw athleticism as it really was, shorn of its glamour, and he knew its poverty. It led no whither. He wondered if boys, as soon as they left school, realised of what little real use proficiency at rugger was as training for the more serious issues of life; if they understood how trivial it was, when it ceased to culminate in the glory of a gold-tasselled cap. He wondered why no one had tried to alter things. Perhaps they thought it better to let youth play with its toys as long as possible, be happy while it could, since happiness is of all mortal possessions the most ephemeral. They were right, perhaps. At any rate his toys, for they were only toys, had been broken to pieces. He knew that he would probably never play rugger again after he left Fernhurst; and once he and Lovelace had made plans to form an old boys' team! It was rather funny. He was glad Lovelace had left when he had. This term would have been a very disquieting one for him. He might not have understood.

In the first week of December the Essex Yeomanry challenged the Second Fifteen to a match. There was no regular Second Fifteen at all. But Akerman collected fifteen people who had played on uppers and trials without playing against Tonford, dressed them up in blue shirts, and turned them out to represent the school. It was an amusing enough match. Most of the Essex Yeomanry had

been bred on soccer, the rest on lacrosse, and they played as such. In the end they just managed to keep the score under one hundred to nil.

Next morning a crowd was surging round the notice-board. Collins charged up to Gordon's study fuming.

"Caruthers, man, have you seen the board? The whole side have got their Seconds."

"What do you mean? We have all had our Seconds for weeks. Do you mean Firsts?"

"No, you ass; that second side have all got nice blue caps with velvet tassels. Foster, Archie, the whole blooming crowd. And that means that there is one First Fifteen colour in the school, Akerman, our revered captain, and twenty-nine Second Fifteen caps? 'The Bull' must be mad!"

Gordon sat quite still for a minute or two thinking.

"Collins," he said at last, "see that cap hanging over the 'Sir Galahad' picture? Yes, that's it, the Second Fifteen cap. Do you mind just flinging it on the top of the cupboard over there. Thank you. The thing is not worth having now. Don't go. Sit down.

"For God's sake let us sit upon the ground,
And tell strange stories of the death of Kings."

Everything was falling to pieces. Gordon began to realise that as soon as we get a thing we no longer want it. Achievement is nothing, the quest is all. Depression descended on him. He envied so much those who had left in the flush of their glory, and stepped into the ranks of their regiments, fresh with the undimmed laurels. He had to stay on to see his dreams shattered, to watch hope after hope go down. He was wiser now. He saw the pitiful poverty of his former aims; but wisdom had not brought him happiness. No one likes to learn that they have wasted three years of their lives striving for a crown of withered bays. An extraordinary irony lay in the fact that outwardly he was so successful. Homage of a sort was paid him; he was certainly the most important person in the House. The rest did not seem to understand. They were upset,

bored, worried, but they did not know why. They did not see that the ground was slipping under their very feet.

Betteridge understood; but then he had known it the whole time. He had not felt the sickening shock of discovery. Ferrers had shouted for years against the cult of athleticism; he was thundering now. But Gordon was completely, utterly miserable. He had to stay on two more terms at least, watching pack after pack go tumbling down. Two terms! Why, a little while ago he was revelling in the prospect of two more years, two years of complete realisation. The idea was intolerable now. He would write to his people and get them to take him away. His place was at the front, with the happier leaders of other years. Ferrers would stay on for years, and at last see the school becoming what he had wanted it to become. Betteridge was leaving at the end of the term; the rest, they would pass by; go on unnoticed, uncared for. He was the lonely antagonist of destiny, going down scornful before many spears.

CHAPTER IV

ROMANCE

And in this state of depression, longing only for some means of temporarily dulling his senses, Gordon first began to take an interest in Morcombe. Morcombe was considerably Gordon's junior; not so much in years—there was, as a matter of fact, only a few months between them—as in position. Morcombe had come late; had made little mark at either footer or cricket; and had finally drifted into the Army class, where, owing to private tuition and extra hours, he found himself rather "out of it" in the House. In hall he used to sit at the top of the table; and it was usual for the prefect, when he had grown tired of wandering round, asking if anyone wanted any work done, to talk to the top two at the table. Taking hall was so unutterably dull (unless, of course, Rudd was the hall-keeper, on which occasion an impromptu concert was held) that any kind of distraction was welcomed by the weary prefect on duty.

Gordon very rarely took hall. He generally managed to find someone to assume the duty for him; but one day everyone seemed engaged on some pursuit or other, so with every anticipation of a thoroughly rotten evening he went down to hall. He began to read Shelley, and found it impossible. The surroundings were unpropitious to lyric poetry. All about him sat huddled fragments of humanity scratching half-baked ideas with crossed nibs into dog-eared notebooks. There was a general air of unrest. Gordon tried *Sinister Street*; some of the episodes in Lepard Street were more in harmony with his feelings, but there was in Compton Mackenzie's prose a Keats-like perfection of phrase which seemed almost as much out of

place as the *Adonais*. As a last resort Gordon began to talk to the two boys nearest him, Bray and Morcombe. Bray always amused him; his whole outlook on life was so exactly like his footer. But for once Gordon found him rather dull. Morcombe was much more interesting. There was something about him that made an irresistible appeal to Gordon.

In second hall that evening Gordon discovered from a House list that Morcombe was in the Army class. He consulted Foster on the subject.

"Know anything about a lad called Morcombe?"

"Yes; he is in the Army class. Rather a fool. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I was talking to him in hall to-night. He didn't seem a bad kid."

"Perhaps he may be. I haven't taken much interest in him."

"Oh, it is nothing."

Gordon returned to his book. Five minutes later he began again.

"Is Morcombe fairly high in form?"

"Not very. Why this interest all of a sudden?"

"Nothing."

Foster looked at him for a second, then burst into a roar of laughter.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" said Gordon.

"Oh, nothing."

Gordon looked rather fierce; and returned once more to the history of Michael Fane.

Two nights later Gordon came into his study to find Morcombe sitting with Foster, preparing some con.

"Hope you don't mind me bringing this lad in," said Foster. "I am in great difficulties with some con."

Gordon grunted, and proceeded to bury himself in *The Pot of Basil*.

"I say, Caruthers," broke in Foster. "You might help us with this Vergil, will you? It's jolly hard. Here you are: look, 'Fortunate Senex——'"

Gordon went through the familiar passage with comparative ease.

"There now, you see," said Foster, "there's some use in these Sixth Form slackers after all. By the way, what did you think of Claremont's sermon last night?"

Conversation flowed easily. Morcombe was quick, and, at times, almost amusing. Foster let Gordon and him do most of the talking, and Gordon unaccountably found himself trying to appear at his best.

"You know," he was saying, "I do get so sick of these masters who go about with the theory of 'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world,' and in war-time, too! With all these men falling, and no advance being made from day to day."

"Yes," said Morcombe; "I agree with the 'much good, but much less good than ill' philosophy."

Gordon was surprised out of himself.

"Good Lord! I shouldn't have thought you had read the *Shropshire Lad*."

"We are not all Philistines, you know."

Thus began a friendship entirely different from any Gordon had known before. He did not know what his real sentiments were; he did not even attempt to analyse them. He only knew that when he was with Morcombe he was indescribably happy. There was something in him so natural, so unaffected, so sensitive to beauty. After this Morcombe came up to Gordon's study nearly every evening, and usually Foster left them alone together, and went off in search of Collins.

Indeed this friendship, coupled with his admiration for Ferrers, was all that kept Gordon from wild excesses during the dark December days and the drear opening weeks of the Easter term. During the long morning hours, when Gordon was supposed to be reading history, more than once there came over him a wish to plunge himself into the feverish waters of pleasure, and forget for a while the doubts and disappointments that overhung everything in his life. At times he would sit in the big window-seat, when the school was changing class-rooms, and as he saw the sea of faces of those, some big, some small, who had drifted with the stream, and had soon forgotten early

resolutions and principles in the conveniently broadminded atmosphere of a certain side of Public School life, he realised how easily he could slip into that life and be engulfed. No one would mind ; his position would be the same ; no one would think worse of him. Unless, of course, he was caught. Then probably everyone would turn round upon him ; that was the one unforgivable sin—to be found out. But it was rarely that anyone was caught ; and the descent was so easy. In his excitement he might perhaps forget a little.

And then, perhaps, Ferrers would come rushing up to his study, aglow with health and clean, fresh existence. And he would talk of books and poetry, and life and systems, and Gordon would realise the ugliness of his own misgivings when set beside the noble idealism of art. Ferrers was not a preacher ; he never lectured anyone. He believed in setting boys high ideals. "We needs must love the highest when we see it." And during these months his influence on Gordon was tremendous.

Then, when the long evenings came, with Morcombe sitting in the games study, his face flushed with the glow of the leaping fire, talking of Keats and Shelley, himself a poem, Gordon used to wonder how he could ever have wished to dabble in ugly things, out of his cowardice to face the truth. Those evenings were, in fact, the brightest of his Fernhurst days ; their happiness was unsubstantial, inexplicable, incomprehensible, but none the less a real happiness.

They vanished, however ; and the day would begin again, with the lonely hours of morning school, when Gordon realised once more the emptiness of his position, and how hopelessly he had failed to do any of the things he had set out to do.

He began to agree with Sophocles that "Not to be born is best."

CHAPTER V

VACCINIA NIGRA

The state of affairs was summed up by Archie Fletcher in the last week of the Christmas term.

"This place is simply ghastly now," he said; "all the best fellows have gone. Next term we shall have that awful ass Rudd head of the House. Then all the young masters have gone, and we are left with these fossils, fretting because they are too old to fight, and making our lives unbearable because we are too young. As soon as I am old enough I mean to go and fight; but I can't stick the way these masters croak away about the trenches all day long. If you play badly at rugger you are asked what use you will be in a regiment. If your French prose is full of howlers, you are told that slackers aren't wanted in the trenches. Damn it all, we know that all these O.F.'s who are now fighting in France slacked at work and cribbed; and they weren't all in the Fifteen. And splendid men they are, too. These masters forget and panic about. Fernhurst isn't what it was. Last term we had a top-hole set of chaps, and I loved Fernhurst, but I am not going to stick here now. I am going back home till I am eighteen. Then I'll go and fight. This is no place for me."

It was the requiem of all "the old dreams"; and Gordon knew it for his own as well.

During the Christmas holidays Gordon tried to forget as far as possible Fernhurst, and all that Fernhurst stood for. More and more he found himself turning for consolation to the poets; but now it was to different poets that he turned. The battle-cry of Byron, the rebel flag of Swinburne, lost their hold over him. He himself was so entangled in strife that he wanted soothing companions. In

the poetry of Ernest Dowson he read something of his own failure to realise the things he had hoped for. *Endymion*, rolling like a stream through valleys and wooden plains, carried him outside the hoarse babble of voices; *Comus* lulled him into a temporary security with its abundance of perfect imagery. For the first time he went down to The Poetry Bookshop in Devonshire Street, and it was to him as a dim chapel, where the echoes of the world were lost. There was a perfect serenity in the small room at the top of the wooden stairs, with the dark blue curtains, the intent faces, the dim, shaded lights, the low voice reading. It seemed the very sanctuary of art. He wished that thus, in some monastic retreat, he might spend his whole life in a world of dreams and illusions. But he realised that the hold of life was too strong on him. At the same time he loved and hated the blare of trumpets, the stretching plain, the spears glimmering in the sun. He had sought for power and position; and yet when they were won he despised them. The future was impenetrable. But he returned for the Easter term determined to do his duty by the House, however much he might disappoint himself.

On the very first day of the term "the Bull" called him up.

"Caruthers," he began, "you remember there was some talk last year about altering the conditions of the Three Cock. Well, I think it would be much better in every way if we could come to some arrangement by which you should play against two houses instead of three. You see, conditions are so very changed. When the match was started you had ninety boys and each outhouse had thirty. Now you have under seventy and each outhouse over thirty-five. It is ten years now since you won, and it is a pity it is not more of a game. Because your men can't enjoy it, and I know mine don't. What do you think?"

"I think we would all rather go on as we are at present, sir."

"But don't you see how hard it is for you ever to win?"

"Yes, sir; and it is also rather hard for us to accept charity."

"Well, of course; I can't force anything on you. It is a matter for you to decide. But it does seem a pity to make a match like the Three Cock a permanent farce, merely because you are too proud to see that you can't take on the whole school. We'll discuss the matter at the end of the term again."

When the House learnt of this interview it raged furiously.

"Confounded insolence calling it a farce," said Foster. "And, after all, we stand a jolly good chance of winning, you know. Heavens! we will boot them to blazes."

Everyone in the School House considered the idea of a change preposterous. Gordon alone realised that the present was an impossible state of affairs. Sixty-four against a hundred and twenty! After all, they couldn't hope to win more than once in six years. He pointed this out to Morcombe in second hall that evening.

"As a matter of fact, if we win this year, I believe I shall go to 'the Bull' and offer to change it."

"But why?" said Morcombe. "There are times when I can't understand you, and this is one of them. Surely, if we win, it is a proof that we are good enough to go on playing! Why stop then?"

"Because, if we did win, it would be only once in a way. And I can't bear to think of our giving in after a beating by seventy points. It is an anti-climax. I would much rather lay down our privilege willingly. That's why I admire Sulla so much. At the very height of his power he laid it down, and went into a glorious retirement. His is the most dramatic exit in history. I should like the House to do that. We have taken on too big a thing. We have got to give in sooner or later."

"Perhaps so," said Morcombe; "and I suppose 'the Bull' thinks you are thoroughly conceited and proud."

"I believe so," said Gordon. "But let us talk about something else."

As a whole the Easter term began far more satisfactorily than the Christmas term had ended.

There were no "uppers." House captains ran every-

thing. Gordon was a sort of dictator. He might have been quite happy; he might have flung himself with a whole-hearted enthusiasm into the training of House sides, had he not learnt the term before the littleness of athleticism. In the days when he had never doubted at all, he had thought that the only object of an Easter term was to win House matches. And even now, because he knew that the House's reputation depended so much on athletics, he spared no effort towards that end. Yet he knew that he and the House were wasting their lives, seeking vain things in a land of sand and thorns. It made him sick to think of a whole house working for nothing but ephemeral athletic triumphs. And he saw that others, too, were beginning to realise this. Once or twice when he had been talking to Davenport about the House chances, he saw a look come in his eyes of amused contempt, which seemed to say: "Do you, with your literary tastes, really imagine the winning of a House match is of such vast importance?"

But at the beginning of the term, at any rate, life was not so unpleasant. Morgan had been promoted into the Lower Sixth, and Gordon found him a most entertaining person. Naturally clever and naturally indolent, Morgan's work presented a strange contrast. He and Gordon would settle down to prepare *Œdipus Tyrannus* for Finnemore. They would begin lethargically. After ten lines Morgan would ask whether they had done enough; Gordon would fling a book at his head; somehow or other they would slop through thirty lines. Then Morgan would shut his book, and refuse to do any more.

"Thirty lines is enough for Finnemore, and, besides, I feel rather slack to-night."

Gordon did not take the trouble to point out that the same feeling of slackness overcame him every night.

They would both pull up their chairs in front of the fire, and waste the rest of hall talking. The next morning, however, Gordon would discover that the lines they had prepared the night before conveyed no meaning to him at all. He would curse Morgan, and then go up to the library, rout out Jebb's translation, and prepare the Greek. Then

he would move across to school with the contented feeling of work well done.

Morgan would be put on to con. Gordon would wait, laughing to himself. He was sure Morgan would make an awful mess of things. But somehow or other he always managed to translate it correctly, if not stylishly.

"Morgan, you did that again when I wasn't there," Gordon would say afterwards.

"Oh no; we prepared it pretty well last night for a change."

After a while Gordon got used to this apparent miracle; but he himself had invariably to consult the English authority. He did not tell Morgan that. The climax was reached when Finnemore, who liked Gordon and thought him rather clever, wrote in Morgan's report: "He relies rather too much on Caruthers's help for his Sophocles translation." It was an interpretation that had occurred to neither.

CHAPTER V

THE DAWN OF NOTHING

Slowly the Easter term moved on. As the days went by the sense of failure, which had overhung everything Gordon had done the term before, returned with an increased poignancy. The Thirds ended in a defeat which was rendered no more pleasant by the fact that it was inevitable The House played quite well. Morgan was an excellent captain, and the best man on the field, but he was not backed up at all by a weak and light side. No one expected the House to win. The defeat was no reflection on Gordon's captaincy. The Chief, in fact, had come to him and said :

"Well, Caruthers, of course we were much too small a side, but I think we put up a very plucky fight. I don't think you have anything to grumble at. They did much better than I expected, at any rate."

But Gordon was always too prone to judge by results. He contrasted the game with last year's triumphs, and with the glorious defeat of the year before, which had brought more honour than many victories. The House seemed incapable of holding out any longer. Its day seemed to have passed, at the very moment when they were all expecting such great things. It was very different from what he had hoped for. There would not be much to remember his captaincy by.

One morning towards the middle of February he was glancing down the casualty list, when he saw Jeffries's name among those killed. He put the paper down, and walked very quietly across to his study. Jeffries was well out of it, perhaps ; but still Gordon wished he could have seen him once more. That last terrible scene in Study 16 rose clear before his eyes. He could almost hear the bang

of the Chief's door. And now Jeffries was dead ; and no one would care. A master, perhaps, might notice his name and say : " Just as well ; he would have made a mess of his life." They had never known Jeffries.

" You look rather upset this morning," murmured Morgan from a corner of the room. Gordon had not noticed him.

" I am rather ; a chap who had a study with me . . . Jeffries . . . he is in the casualty list this morning."

" A. R. Jeffries, is that ? "

" Yes. But you didn't know him, did you ? "

" Oh no ; but I saw his photo in a winning Thirds group, I think."

" Yes, that would be him. He was a fine forward."

Gordon was glad to think that that was what his friend was remembered for. Only the good remained. It was as Jeffries would have wished. . . .

The Two Cock drew near. There had been a good chance of winning once, but influenza had played havoc with the side. Gordon told them they were going to win, encouraged them, presented a smiling face, but his heart was heavy. He saw another cup going to join the silver regiment on the Buller's sideboard ; another hope broken. He had never found life quite so hard before ; only Morgan's unshatterable optimism, Ferrers's volcanic energy, and his own friendship for Morcombe made things bearable at all. And yet he had all the things he had once wanted. Now Betteridge had left, he was indisputably the biggest man in the House. Rudd was a sadly broken reed. At last he began to see that the mere trappings of power might deceive the world, but not their wearer.

A week before the Two Cock Tester paid an unexpected week-end visit. He was full of vitality and exuberance. He was just the same, debonair, light-hearted, thoroughly happy. Everyone was pleased to see him ; he was pleased to see everyone. He was almost hilarious at times. But as Gordon watched him carefully, his mirth seemed like that of Byron in *Don Juan*, laughter through his tears. The others did not notice, because they had never known Tester.

Just after prayers he met Tester on his way back from supper with the Chief.

"Hullo! I have been looking for you," he said; "come for a stroll round the courts."

"Well," said Tester, as soon as they were out of earshot, "what do you make of it?"

"Pretty awful."

"Yes, I suppose you have seen a good many ideals go tumbling down. All our generation has been sacrificed; of course it is inevitable. But it is rather hard. The older men have seen some of their hopes realised; we shall see none. I don't know when this war will end; not just yet, I think. But whenever it does, just as far as we are concerned the days of roses will be over. For the time being art and literature are dead. Look at the rotten stuff that's being written to-day. At the beginning we were deceived by the tinsel of war; Romance dies hard. But we know now. We've done with fairy tales. There is nothing glorious in war, no good can come of it. It's bloody, utterly bloody. I know it's inevitable, but that's no excuse. So are rape, theft, murder. It's a bloody business. Oh, Caruthers, my boy, the world will be jolly Philistine the next few years. Commercialism will be made a god. Beauty and art will be stamped out."

"Do you mean there is going to be nothing for us after the war?" said Gordon.

"Not for you or me; for the mass, perhaps. No one can go through this without having his senses dulled, his individuality knocked out of him. It will take at least twenty years to recover what we have lost, and there won't be much fire left in you and me by then. Oh, I tell you I am frightened of what's coming after. I can't face it. Of course there may be a great revival some day. Do you remember what Rupert Brooke said in *Second Best* about there waiting for the 'great unborn some white tremendous daybreak'? Well, that's what may happen. But our generation will have been sacrificed for it. I suppose we should not grumble. But we only live once; only once shall we glory in the wind, and the sea, and love

and the ecstasy of being alive. And it's all smashed ; we shall have never really lived."

" Yes," said Gordon slowly, " it is hard on us. I think Jeffries is well out of it. I hadn't seen it in that light before. I have been so bound up in my own disappointments. Everything I had longed for has crumbled to dust."

" It is the same with all of us," broke in Tester. " Do you remember that day of the Hawley match, and what I said about Oxford ? Well, I had just longed for Oxford. I wanted to begin life over again, to sweep out the past. I was beginning to realise what beauty meant. And then down comes the war. And I don't suppose I shall ever have a chance now. I don't know whether there is an after life or not, but if there is, I shall cut a pretty sorry figure, if there is going to be a judgment. Well, it is my own fault. I put things off too late. But I should have been a different chap, I think, if——"

Foster's voice rang out across the night :

" Come on, you two. What are you doing out there ? The coffee's boiling over. Buck up."

" Right you are," shouted back Tester.

In a second he had put on again his old pose of indifference. He played his part through thoroughly ; no one, as he danced with Collins up and down the narrow study, would have associated him with the despairing philosopher of a few moments ago. Gordon looked at him in amazement. What a consummate actor he was ! How successfully he kept his true character to himself, as something too sensitive for the crowd to look at.

Early on the Sunday morning he went back to his regiment. Gordon walked down to the station with him.

" I am going to the front in about a week, you know," said Tester, as they were standing on the platform.

" Good Lord ! man, why didn't you tell us before ? "

" Oh, I don't know. I didn't want them all unburdening themselves to me. . . . Here's the train. Well, good-bye, Caruthers. Good luck."

"Thanks awfully; and mind you come back all right."
Tester smiled at him rather sadly.
"I am not coming back," he said.

The Two Cock came and went. The score was not very high against the House. But it was a poor game. The school deserved to win, because they played less badly than the House. But there was very little life in the game. This may have been due to a heavy field day two days before; but whatever it was, the result was pitiable. Gordon had almost ceased to expect anything. Day followed day. Everyone was discontented; even Ferrers began to doubt whether the war was having such a good effect on Public Schools after all. He said as much in an article in *The Country*. He was always saying things in *The Country*. It was his clearing-ground.

The Three Cock drew near. And each day Gordon began to think the House less likely to win. He had watched the outhouses play, and knew how good they were. One afternoon the Buller's captain challenged the House to a friendly game. A very hard game resulted in a draw. There was nothing to choose between the sides. And in the Three Cock Buller's would have Claremont's and Rogers's to help them.

There were discussions in the House as to whether the score would be kept under twenty. Someone suggested it would have been a much better game if they had accepted "the Bull's" offer of playing two houses instead of three. When the day came the outhouse bloods were confidently laying three to one on their chances of running up a score of over thirty.

As Gordon sat in his study after lunch, before going down to change, he found it hard to believe that this was actually the day that he and his friends had looked forward to for so long. It was to have marked the start of a new era of School House greatness. It was to have been the beginning of the new epoch. With a slightly cynical smile he compared it with the way in which the Germans had toasted "Der Tag!" Both results would be much the same.

Lethargically he got up, put a coal or two on the fire, and went down to change.

The game followed much the same course that other Three Cocks had followed during the last four years. For the first half the House did fairly well, and kept the score down to thirteen to nil. Collins played magnificently; Morgan was in form; Gordon himself was not conspicuous. Then came the second half, when the light School House pack grew tired, and was pushed about all over the field. The cheering of tries grew desultory, and unenthusiastic. The final score was forty-seven to nil.

"You know, Caruthers," said Collins on the way up from the field, "we should have done better to have only taken on two houses."

"Yes," said Gordon shortly.

As soon as he had changed, he went over to "the Bull's" study. He had already decided that it would be better to alter the condition of the match once and for all. It meant to him the complete failure of all his plans. His whole career seemed wasted. He had set out to lead the House to victory. In the end not only had he retired, he had actually surrendered.

"The Bull" received him quite kindly.

"Ah, come round about the match, Caruthers?"

"Yes, sir. I think we had better play a Two Cock in future. Three houses are a good deal more than we can take on."

"Well, of course, I had seen that all along," said "the Bull." "It *is* too much. The conditions are so changed. Well, of course, we can't do this without the consent of the Games Committee. I think we had better have a meeting to-morrow afternoon. You might tell the others, will you?"

On the next day after lunch the Games Committee met in "the Bull's" study. "The Bull" stood with his back to the fireplace.

"Well, you know, I have called you here this afternoon about the Three Cock. Of course conditions have so changed that it would be no reflection on the School House——"

"The Bull" went on. Gordon sat forward on the sofa listening subconsciously. Scenes rose before his mind. Of Mansell two years back, after Richard's Thirds, shouting: "Wait till 1915." Of Hazelton in the dormitory saying: "Our day's coming, and you'll see it, Caruthers." Everyone had expected this year to be such a triumph. And here he was signing, as it were, the death warrant of School House football.

"The Bull" had finished speaking. . . . A resolution was passed. . . .

"Well," said "the Bull," "it is a lovely day, and I don't want to keep you in. I expect you all want to be out doing something."

Gordon got out of the study somehow or other.

One of the Games Committee came up to him.

"Jolly good idea of 'the Bull's,' I think. It was much too big a job for you. Much better arrangement."

"Oh, much," said Gordon.

He went back to the old games study, the very walls of which seemed eloquent with voices of the dead. The rest of the House had gone for a run. He was all alone. His head fell forward on his hands. It was all over. The captaincy he had tried so hard to gain had ended in pitiable failure. He had to drag through one more term, and then go out, having left behind him nothing but shattered dreams. It was the desolation, the utter desolation! . . .

All that he had worked for during those four years lay in dust at his feet. Nothing remained. Out of all his experiences and emotions he had harvested nothing that would help him through the long, arid journey of life. He had only a few ecstatic moments to look back upon, a few hopes that had not been realised, a few shadowy illusions. Nothing tangible remained.

And as Gordon's mind dwelt on this the love of the monastic life which had so overwhelmed him the holidays before swept over him again with renewed vigour. In the Roman Church at any rate was there not something permanent? *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.* . . . That boast was surely not in vain. He longed to

surrender himself completely, to fling away his own aims and inclinations, and abandon himself to a life of quiet devotion safe from the world. It was the natural reaction. He had been tossed on the waters of trouble and had grown weary of strife. In Plato's *Republic* Ulysses asked for the life of a private individual free from care. "After battle sleep is best. After noise, tranquillity." Dowson's exquisite lines on the *Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration* came back to him:

"They saw the glory of the world displayed,
They saw the bitter of it and the sweet.
They knew the roses of the world would fade
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.
Therefore they rather put away desire. . . ."

That was what he wanted, to merge himself into the great silent poetry of the Catholic life. The Protestant creed could never give him what he wanted. There was too much tolerance, too much sheltering of the individuality; he wanted a complete, an utter surrender. He passed the entire holidays in the world of ideas; he read nothing but poetry, or what dealt with poetry. He tried to recapture the wonderful full-blooded enjoyment of that last summer term. But for all that he found material thoughts stealing in on his most sacred moments. A chance phrase, a word even, and there would suddenly rise before him the sceptre of his own failure. And he was forced to realise that as yet he was unfit to lay down the imperious burden of his own personality. The hold of life was too strong. He still wanted the praise of the populace, "the triumph and the roses and the wine."

Well, there was one more term; let him make the most of the roses while he could. In this state of vague indecision he returned for what was to be his last term.

A big programme of First Eleven matches had been arranged; and the first game was at Uphill on the second Saturday of the term. Fernhurst won with ease, and Gordon knocked up forty-two. The match was over

before tea; and, as the side had not to go back till six o'clock, they spent the interval in walking round the grounds.

Few schools are situated in more perfect surroundings than Uphill. There are wide gardens and flowery walks. Rhododendrons were flaming red and white, a hedge of gorse shone gold. It was a Roman Catholic school, and now and then a noble Calvary rose out of the flowers. The Abbey watched over the place. Monks in long black robes moved about slowly, magisterially. Gordon went up to one of them and spoke to him shyly:

"A wonderful place this, sir."

"Yes; it is the right sort of place to train a boy in. Surround him with beautiful things, make a real perception of beauty the beacon light of his life, when he is young, and he will be safe. For there are so many things that are beautiful and poisonous like iridescent fungi, and it is so hard to differentiate between the true and the false. But everything here is so pure and unworldly that I think we manage to show our boys what is the highest. We fail at times, but on the whole we succeed."

He looked so kind, so sympathetic, this old man, that Gordon felt bound to pour out his feelings to him.

"You know, sir," he said, "I have awfully wanted to talk to a Roman Catholic whom I thought would understand me, and especially one like yourself, who has willingly abandoned all his own ambitions. There is something very fine in the complete surrender of your Church. In ours there is so much room for difference of opinion, so much toleration of various doctrines. There seems so little certainty. In Rome there seems no doubt at all."

"Yes, the Catholic Faith is a very beautiful creed," said the old man; "we are misjudged; we are called narrow-minded and bigoted. They say we want to make everyone conform to one type, and that we bind them with chains. But, my son, it is not with chains that the Holy Church binds her children. It is with loving arms thrown round them. The Church loves her children far too much to wish them to leave her even for a minute. She wants them

entirely, hers and hers alone. Perhaps you will say that is selfish ; but I do not think so. It is the great far-seeing love that sees what is best for its own. Love is nearly always right. But if you wish to keep your own views, to worship God in your own way, well, there are other creeds. Protestantism, it seems to me, lets out its followers, as it were, on strings and lets them wander about a little, laugh and pluck flowers, in the certainty that at the last she can draw her own to her. Well, that is one way of serving God, and in the Kingdom of God there is no right or wrong way, provided the service be sincere. There are many roads to heaven. Our road is one of an infinite love that draws everything to itself. There are other ways ; but that is ours."

" But supposing there was a person," said Gordon, " who really wanted to surrender himself to that perfect love, but who found the call of the world too strong. You know, sir, I should give anything to be as you, safe and secure. But I know I should break away ; the world would call me again. I should return, but when I give myself, I want to give myself wholly, unconditionally. I want there to be no doubt ; and I want to come to-day."

" I will tell you a story," said the monk. " I was a boy here years ago, and there was one boy, brilliant at games and work, whom I admired very much, and by the time I had myself reached a high position he came back to us as a monk. I used to live in a little village, just behind that hill, and I used to ask him down to supper sometimes. And I remember one day my father said to him : ' You know, I envy you a lot.'

" ' Why ? ' he asked.

" ' Well,' said my father, ' as far as this world is concerned you are well provided for. You live in beautiful surroundings, comfortable and happy. And for the next world, as far as we know, no one could be more certain of happiness than you.'

" The young monk looked at my father rather curiously, and said :

" ' Perhaps so ; but when I look round at your happy little

family and your home interests, I think we have given up a good deal.'

"And only a year later that young man ran away with a girl in the village, and he was excommunicated from the Church. And yet I expect that the whole time he really loved our life best; only the call of worldly things was too strong; and he was too weak."

"Then what will be the end of me?" asked Gordon.

"Wait, my son. I waited a long time before I knew for certain that God's way was best, and that the things men worshipped were vain. Those are the most fortunate, perhaps, who can see the truth at once, and go out into the world spreading the truth by the influence of a blameless life. But we are not all so strong as that. It takes a long time for us to be quite certain; and even then we have to come and shut ourselves away from the world. We are too weak. But we have our place. And in the end you, too, I expect, will so probe the happiness and grief of the world and find them of little value, and when you have, you will find the Holy Church waiting for you. It does not matter when or how you come; only you must bring yourself wholly. It is not so very much we ask of you. And we give with so infinite a prodigality."

"Yes," said Gordon, "I suppose there will be rest at last."

That evening as he sat discussing the cricket match with Morgan the captain of the school came in and gave him his "Firsts." Morgan was profuse with congratulations. Everyone seemed pleased. It was the hour he had long pictured in his imagination—the hour when he should get his coveted "Firsts." He himself had wanted them so badly; but somehow or other they did not mean very much just now.

CHAPTER VI

THE THINGS THAT SEEM

But the heart of youth is essentially fickle; and Gordon's lambent spirit, which had for some time almost ceased to strive for anything, suddenly swept round to the other extreme, and was filled with the desire to reassert itself at all costs. Suddenly, almost without realising it, Gordon was fired with the wish to finish his school career strongly, not to give way before adversity, but to end as he had begun. He would be the Ulysses of Tennyson, not of Plato. "Though much is taken, much abides . . . 'tis not too late to seek a newer world." . . . Like a tiger he looked round, growling for his prey, and his opportunity was not slow in coming.

Ferrers was sitting in his study one afternoon, talking very despondently about the general atmosphere at Fernhurst.

"It is not what I had hoped for," he said; "in fact, it is quite the reverse. The young masters are gone, the bloods are gone. The new leaders are not sure of their feet, and these old pedants have taken their chance of getting back their old power. And the whole school is so discontented, fed up; no keenness anywhere. The masters tell them: 'You don't get on in games; then you'll be useless in the trenches.' Wretched boys begin to believe them. They think they are wrong, when really they are just beginning to see the light. They are beginning to look at games as they are. There's no glory attached to them now—no true victories—glamour is all removed. They see games as they are, see the things they have been worshipping all these years. But the masters tell them games are right, they are wrong; it is their duty to do as others did

before them. Oh, I wish we could smash those cracked red spectacles through which every Public School boy is forced to look at life."

"But can't we, sir?"

"It would be no good; they wouldn't believe you. I am getting sick. For years I have been shouting out, and trying to prove to them what's wrong. They won't believe. They are blind, and it is the masters' fault, curse them. There they sit, talking and doing nothing. I begin to worship that man, I forget his name, who said: 'Those who can, do—those who can't, teach.' It sums up our modern education. It is all hypocrisy and show."

"But, sir," said Gordon, "we can't do much, but let's do what we can. Now, when the glamour has fallen off athleticism, let's show the school what wretched things they have been serving so long. If we can in any way put a check on this nonsense now, if in Fernhurst only, we shall be doing something. After the war we shall have a fine Fifteen winning matches, and the school will feel its feet. We must stop it now—now, when there is no glamour, when the school is tired of endless 'uppers,' and sick of the whole business. Now's the time."

"Yes; but how? This sort of thing doesn't happen in a night."

"I know; but we can sow the seeds now. The Stoics is the thing. We can have a debate on the 'Value of Athletics,' and, heavens! I bet the whole House will vote against them. The House is sick of it all. We'll carry the motion. We'll get the best men to speak. We'll give sound arguments. Then we'll have formed a precedent. It will appear in the school magazine that the Stoics, the representative society of Fernhurst thought, has decided that the blind worship of games is harmful. It will make the school think. It's a start, sir, it's a start."

"You are right, Caruthers, you are right. We'll flutter the Philistine dovecots."

Gordon had not the slightest doubt about the success of the scheme. He himself was at the very summit of his power, and he had a rollicking lead to start with. He had

been making scores for the Eleven out of all proportion to his skill; he was almost certain for the batting cup. His influence was not to be discounted. He could get the House to vote as he wanted; he was sure of it. He told Davenport of the scheme, and he also was enthusiastic.

"By Jove! that's excellent. It's about time the school realised that caps and pots are not the alpha and omega of our existence."

The air was full of the din of onset.

Nearly the whole House attended the meeting, and the outhouses rolled up in good numbers, more out of curiosity than anything else. They thought the whole thing rather silly. There had been a debate more than two years back on "whether games should be compulsory." Only six had voted against compulsion. "The Bull" remembered this, and came to the debate, strong in his faith in the past. He wanted to see this upstart Ferrers squashed.

Ferrers himself opened the discussion with a volcanic attack on the whole Public School system.

"How much longer," he finished, "are we all going to waste our time, our energy, our force on kicking a football? We have no strength for anything else. And all the time, while Germany has been plotting against us, piling up armaments, we have been cheering on Chelsea and West Ham United. Look at the result. We were not prepared, we are only just getting ready now. And why? Because we had wasted our time on trivial things, instead of things that mattered; and unless we turn away from all this truck, trash and cant about athleticism, England is not going to stand for anything worth having."

He sat down amid tempestuous applause. The audience were really excited. They had gradually grown sick of games during the last two terms, and now apparently they had the best authority for doing so. Everyone likes being congratulated.

The opposition suffered in having Burgess to support them. We have heard of him before. Years had not altered him much. He was the same conceited, self-righteous puppet as of old. People got tired of listening

to him. There was a sound of shuffling, a window began to bang with unnecessary noise. He sat down to an apathetic recognition.

Davenport then made a very biting speech against games. "The Bull" was surprised to see him speaking on Ferrers's side. He was in the Second Fifteen, and a very useful outside.

"Whatever we may have done before the war," he cried, "and we did many foolish things, it is quite obvious that now this worship of sport must cease. Let us hope it is not revived. We are sent here to be educated—that is, to have our minds trained; instead of that, we have our bodies developed, our minds starved. We play footer in the afternoon, we have gym. at all hours of the day, and other experiments in voluntary compulsion, such as puntabouts after breakfast. The result is we work at our play, and play at our work. . . ." He elaborated the scheme in an amusing way. There was a lot of laughter. "The Bull" looked fierce. Rudd, who had for a "rag" insisted on speaking for the opposition, discoursed on the value of "*mens sana in corpore sano.*" Everyone shrieked with laughter.

He finished up thus:

"Well, look at me. I am the hardest-working fellow in the school." A roar of laughter went up. Rudd had nearly been deprived of his position of school prefect for doing so little work. "I am also a fine athlete. To-day I clean bowled two people on the pick-up, and hit a splendid four over short-slip's head. I am what I am because of our excellent system of work and play. Look at me, I say, and vote for athleticism."

Buffoonery is often more powerful than the truest oratory.

The motion was put before the House.

A lot of people spoke. All in favour of the motion. It was great fun watching "the Bull's" face grow gradually darker. Morgan said that only fools and Philistines cared for games. They were amusing to pass an afternoon with, and because one had to have exercise, but that was all.

Gordon waited till near the end, then he got up.

"I must first congratulate everyone on the broadminded view they have taken of this important question; and I think it is an infallible proof that the days of athletic domination are ended. For, after all, is it any wonder that clear-thinking men like A. C. Benson pull our system to pieces, when we have to own that for the last twenty years at least the only thing Public School boys have cared about is games? And with such a belief they go out into life, to find the important posts seized by middle-class men who have really worked. No one works at a Public School. People who do are despised. If they happen to be good at games as well, they are tolerated. It is a condemnation of the whole system. And, after all, what are games? Merely a form of exercise; we have got to keep our bodies healthy, because, as Mr Rudd so wisely put it, a healthy mind means a healthy body. Games were invented because people wanted to enjoy their exercise. We all enjoy games. I love cricket; but that does not make me worship it. I like eating; but I don't make a god of a chocolate éclair. We can like a thing without bowing down to it, and that's how we have got to treat games. Some fool said 'the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton'; and a fool he was, too. Games don't win battles, but brains do, and brains aren't trained on the footer field. It is time we realised that; and I think from the way the speaking has gone to-night, the school is beginning to understand. And now is the chance to show that you think so. There are no good athletes in the school to-day, the Eleven's rotten and the Fifteen is worse. Men like Lovelace major *were* almost worth worshipping, because they were men; they made athletics appear grand, because they were such glorious creatures themselves; but there are none of that sort here now. We can see games as they really are without any false mist of sentiment, and we can see that for years we have been worshipping something utterly wrong."

Gordon's speech really made an impression. After all, he was a blood, one of the best all-round athletes in the school, and if he thought like that, there must be something in what so many people were saying who ran down games.

The question was put to the vote, and was carried by an enormous majority.

"The Bull" looked for a moment at the crowd of faces that had spurned the things he admired, looked as one who saw nothing, turned on his heel and strode out of the room. The door crashed behind him. As far as Fernhurst was concerned, the days of a blind worship of sport were over; a new ideal would be set before the new generation. "The Bull's" greatness was at an end. Time, sweeping in with its change and new standards, is no respecter of persons.

"Well, we won! Glorious!" said Ferrers.

"Yes," said Gordon, "'we have lit this day a candle that, by the grace of God, shall never be put out'!"

He went down to hall, flushed with triumph. After all, there were some compensations for everything; but he could not remove the feeling that out of all the change and turmoil of his Fernhurst career he had retained nothing tangible. He had written his name upon water; he had as yet found nothing that would accompany him to the end of his journey. He knew that his friendship for Morcombe would lead to nothing: very few school friendships last more than a year or so after one or other has left. He thought of Byron's line: "And friendships were formed too romantic to last." It was too true, he had yet to find his real ideal. He was about to begin the serious battle of life. He was standing on the threshold. The night was black before him; he had no beacon fire to lead him. He dimly perceived that beauty was the goal to which he was striving. But he had only a vague comprehension of its meaning. He had no philosophy. Doubtless in the end the Roman Church, the mother of wanderers, would take him to her breast. But that was a long way off yet, and he wished to bring himself to the final surrender, strong and clean-hearted, not a vessel broken on the back-wash of existence. And yet he had no true guide for the years that stretched before him. This last episode of the debate seemed to bring it home to him more clearly. His life had so far been composed of isolated triumphs and isolated defeats, which

had not yet so combined one with another as to form a bedrock of experience which would serve as a standard for future judgments. He had walked past and made merry, careless of what the next day would bring. He had fought with "the Bull"; and in the struggle he had achieved some things, and failed to achieve more. He had at one time prayed for the long contention to cease; at another he had laughed in the face of his enemy, flushed with the joy of battle. Gazing back on his past, he seemed to stand as a spectator, watching a person who was himself and yet not himself, going through a life of many varied experiences, now plunging in the mud, now soaring to the heights. But the incidents only affected him in a dull, subconscious manner. He had learnt nothing from them. His school days would soon be over, and yet he felt as though he were beginning life all over again. He had found nothing that could stand the wear of time and chance.

But still there remained a few more weeks of Fernhurst; whatever happened, he swore that he would finish as befitted a king. "Samson would quit himself like Samson." There would be time enough for doubts and introspection when it was all over, when for the last time the familiar eight-forty swept him out of Fernhurst's life for ever. At present it was his to leave behind him a name that would survive a little while, "nor all glut the devouring grave." It should be remembered of him that during his day of power he had never once given way, had stood his ground, had never known the poignancy of the "second-best."

Until now Gordon had never really quarrelled with anyone in his own house. All his encounters had been with outhouse men or "the Bull": he might have helped to make the House feel independent of the school, but he had always aimed at the unity of the House's aim. It was a pity that his last contest should have been with the head of his own house.

Rudd was a bad head; there could be no doubt about that. His dormitory made him apple-pie beds, and soaked his candle in water, so that it would not light. The day-room ragged him mercilessly. Gordon had never minded.

In comparison with Rudd's weakness his own strength shone the more. It made him so essentially the biggest power in the House. But things reached a limit shortly after half term, when Rudd tried to drag him in to help him in his troubles, and shelter behind the rest of the prefects.

It all arose from a most "footling" source. Rudd was taking hall, and the usual music hall performance was in full swing. Bray had asked to borrow some ink, and having once gained a pretext for walking about, was dancing up and down the floor singing *What would the Seaside be without the Ladies?* Everyone was, of course, talking. Now a certain Stockbrew, imagining himself a poet, immortalised the occasion with the following stirring lyric:—

> *"Ruddy-doodle went to town*
> *In his little suit of brown,*
> *As he could not find his purse*
> *He cried aloud, 'Oh, where's my nurse?'"*

Like the famous quatrain *The Purple Cow*, this poem immediately achieved a success totally out of proportion to its merits. It was passed slowly down the table. Finally it reached Bray.

"Ah, Rudd," he said, "I believe this is meant for you."

Rudd read it, and flushed a dusky red.

"Who wrote this?"

Proudly the author claimed his work.

"Well—er—let me see," said Rudd: "it is er—gross impertinence. Come and see me after breakfast to-morrow."

The poet sat down, and his friends showered condolences on him; Bray recommenced his wanderings.

That night in second hall Rudd called a prefects' meeting to discuss the affair. He pointed out that it was gross insolence to a prefect, and that a prefects' beating was the recognised punishment for such an offence. Gordon protested vehemently.

"But, damn it all, Rudd, if you are such a weak-kneed ass as to be ragged by a fool like Stockbrew, you jolly well oughtn't to be head of the House. And, by the way, we haven't heard this masterpiece of satire read out yet."

"I don't think there's any need," said Rudd.

"Well, I think there is," said Gordon. "I am not going to see a kid beaten for an unknown piece of cheek. Read the thing out!"

With many blushes Rudd read it out.

"Ah, jolly suitable, too," said Foster. "What you want is a nurse. Good lord, man, can't you look after yourself down in hall. Jolly ignominious, isn't it, having to call up a lot of prefects to back you up? Fine example to the rest of the House, isn't it?"

"Well," stammered Rudd, "I don't pretend to be a strong prefect."

"You certainly aren't," said Foster.

"That's beside the point," said Rudd. "I have been cheeked by Stockbrew, and I am a prefect. The punishment for that is a prefects' beating. There'll be a pre.'s meeting here to-morrow at eight, and if you have anything to grouse about, go to the Chief."

He flounced out of the room like a heroine of melodrama.

"I don't think we'll go to Chief," said Gordon, "he would be utterly fed up. But I am jolly well not going to be made an ass of by Rudd. Think what fools we shall look trotting about on Rudd's apron strings like policemen after a cook."

"Well, what can we do?" said Davenport.

"Do? Why, make Rudd look a bigger ass than we. We have got to give this lad a pre.'s beating. There's no way out of it. We have got to. But if we let the House know about this, a crowd will collect; Rudd will go first and make two fairly effective shots. We shall then proceed in rotation. We will just tap him; the crowd will roar with laughter; it will be damned amusing, and Rudd will look a most sanguinary ass."

"I see," said Foster. "Hats off to the man with the brain."

"But is it quite the game?" suggested Davenport, a stickler for etiquette.

"Is it the game for Rudd to drag us in to back him up? In this world, unfortunately, two blacks invariably make a white."

"I suppose it's all right," said Davenport.

No one else made any objection. Foster and Gordon usually got their own way. The prefects dispersed. Gordon went to tell Morgan the glad tidings. The news was all round the House in a few minutes. Rudd was generally regarded as a priceless fool; it was sure to be awfully good sport.

Then next morning Stockbrew presented himself at Rudd's study. He was terribly overcome at the sight of so formidable a gathering. He wished he had padded. No one had told him of what was to happen. It would have spoilt the situation.

The prefects sat in chairs round the room; Rudd, terribly nervous, was perched on the table. He delivered as short a lecture as possible on the sacredness of the prefectorial dignity and the insignificance of the day-room frequenter.

In a procession they moved to the V. A green. Stockbrew led, Rudd followed, cane in hand. It was all very impressive. Round the V. A green runs a stone path; a good many people were clustered there; there were faces in the V. B class-room just opposite; in the library on the right; even in the Sixth Form class-room on the left.

"Quite an audience for this degrading business," sighed Foster.

"'Butchered to make a Roman holiday,'" said Davenport, who loved a stale quotation. Stockbrew bent over the chain that ran round two sides of the green. Rudd delivered two fairly accurate shots. Stockbrew stirred uncomfortably. He had dim recollections of Claremont reading a poem by Mrs Browning on "the great God Pan" and how cruel it was to "make a poet out of a man!" He saw her meaning now. Then the farce began.

Gordon went up, carefully arranged the victim's coat, stepped back as if preparing a brutal assault, and then flicked him twice. A roar of laughter broke from all sides. Rudd shifted uneasily on his feet.

Foster went up and did the same, then Davenport, then the rest of the prefects. The very walls seemed shrieking with laughter.

Flushing dark red, Rudd strode across to his study. What little dignity he had ever had had been taken from him. Everyone had seen his ignominy. He would never be able to do anything more in the House.

The next night he took hall a pandemonium broke out such as never had been heard before. A game of cricket was played with a tennis ball and a Liddell and Scott; Gordon crossing the courts heard it, and he decided to clinch his victory. He went down to the day-room and walked straight in. There was instant silence. Gordon took no notice of Rudd whatever.

"Look here, you men, you are making a filthy row down here. I heard it right across the courts. The Chief might hear it easily. You have got to shut up. If I hear any more noise I shall give every man two hundred lines; so shut up."

There was comparative peace after this. Rudd had ceased to count in House politics. To all intents and purposes Gordon was head of the House, and the House regarded him as such. Rudd was generally known as the "nominal head." Gordon had got his power, and for the next six weeks he decided to enjoy it to the full. On the cricket field, although not quite keeping to the promise or the luck of May, he yet did well enough to make the batting cup quite certain. There was now no fear of any defeat clouding his last days. He had ceased to worry himself with analysing his emotions. He just let himself enjoy the hour of happiness while he still had it, and did not trouble to question himself how long it would last. He had passed through the time of blind depression during the Easter term when he had seen hope after hope go down: he had come through somehow. It did not matter with what inward searchings of heart. Outwardly he had been a success. Now his outward triumph was even more pronounced. As a few weeks before he had been too prone to look at the inward to the total exclusion of the outward aspect of things, now he began to consider only the things that seem. It was the swing of the pendulum. It remained for him to find the *media via*.

The last days of June and the early weeks of July passed by in a dream of happiness. In the mornings he lounged in his study, reading novels, or talking to Morgan. The afternoons went slowly by like a majestic cavalcade, with the white figures, the drowsy atmosphere of the pavilion, the shadows lengthening across the ground. And then the evenings came, with Morcombe sitting in his study getting helped in his work, or talking about books and people and ideas. The House matches began. A-K senior had quite an average side, but no one expected them to do very much, and it was rather a surprise when, by beating Christy's and Claremont's, they qualified to meet an exceptionally strong Buller's side in the final. Foster and Gordon looked forward to their last match at Fernhurst with the cheerful knowledge that they had no chance of winning, and that therefore they had nothing to fear of disappointment. And it might be quite a jolly sort of friendly game to finish up with. The days raced past so quickly that it came as a shock to Gordon to discover that his last week, with its examinations and threatening form lists, had really come.

"I shall be sorry to leave, you know," he said to Foster. "I am not at all looking forward to the army; it's going to be jolly monotonous."

"Last Christmas I would have given anything to get out of this place," Foster answered. "But now, my Lord! I wish I was coming back. We've had a jolly good time this term."

"I don't like the idea of losing it all so suddenly. We sha'n't ever be able to get it back. Still, we have got one more week before us, to enjoy ourselves."

The first three days of the week it rained incessantly. The Senior final was postponed till the Thursday. Examinations took their desultory course. Gordon had often in the past slacked in exams, but never had he treated them in quite the same indifferent way as he did this term. He had no intention of spoiling his last days by working. Every morning the Sixth went in for a three hours' paper, at nine-thirty. Before eleven Gordon had always shown up his

papers, and strolled out of the room to read *Paradise Lost* in his study. In the afternoon he usually managed to toss off the two hours' exam. in three quarters of an hour. He was bottom in every paper; but of all performances his history paper was perhaps the most daring. The form were doing European history since Waterloo—a period which Gordon was supposed to have been studying since the summer of 1914. He scored fifteen marks out of two hundred, and Finnemore informed him that he had been overmarked at that. Six questions were set, out of which three had to be chosen. Gordon completed the whole paper in a quarter of an hour.

He glanced down the page. No 1. To whom was the unification of Italy due ?

There was no doubt about that. He wrote "Cavour" and looked on to No. 2. It was something about the Berlin decrees. He had never heard of them, and passed on to No. 3. "Give an estimate of Napoleon III.'s character."

That was quite easy. He could give a clean-cut cameo impression of that monarch in two lines. Holland Rose put it so clearly: "A dreamer who unfortunately allowed his dreams to encroach on his waking moments."

The next two questions both looked impossible.

They were about the 1848 revolution, a question that he had always said life was too short to worry about.

The last question, however, was perfectly simple:

"Illustrate by historical examples the truth of the statement 'the people are the rulers of the rich.'"

What an ass the man must be who set such a question !

"There are no illustrations of this theory in history," he wrote.

With the smile of one who has worked well, he blotted his papers, wrote his name at the top, and to the consternation of the master in charge showed them up and walked out.

He was "finishing in style." On Thursday the rain stopped at last, and the Senior final began.

"Foster," said Gordon, as the two walked down to the field, "I believe ours is one of the very worst sides that ever

got into the final. There are two Firsts, you and I. Collins was tried for the Colts two years ago. There are eight others."

"Oh, you forget Bray, a fine, free bat with an unorthodox style. But . . . I believe he made fourteen on a House game the other day."

"Yes, that is a recommendation, of course, but somehow I don't think we shall win, you know."

"Win!" echoed Foster. "We shall be lucky if we avoid an innings defeat."

And this supposition proved still more likely when half-an-hour later the House, having won the toss, had lost three wickets for as many runs. Jack Whitaker, now captain of Buller's, had gone on to bowl first from the end nearest the National Schools. In his first over he had clean bowled Gordon, and in the next he got Foster leg before, and Bradford caught in the slips.

"I foresee," said Collins, "that we shall spend most of this game fielding. A poor way of occupying our last few days."

"That's where I score," said Gordon; "the wicket-keeper has no running to do, and, besides, I rather enjoy a game in which there is nothing to lose, no anxiety or anything. It is a peaceful end to a turgid career. . . . Oh, well hit!"

Bray had just lifted a length ball off the middle stump over short-leg's head.

"That's the sort of cricket I like," said Gordon; "a splendid contempt for all laws and regulations. Heavens! there he goes again!"

A lucky snick flew over the slips to the boundary.

"This is something like," said Foster, and prepared to enjoy himself.

And certainly Bray's cricket was most entertaining. He treated every ball the same; he stepped straight down the pitch with his left foot, raised his bat in the direction of point and then, as the ball was bowled, he pivoted himself violently on his left foot and, going through a complete half-circle, finished, facing the wicket-keeper, with both feet outside the crease, but his bat well over the line. The

chief attraction of this gymnastic feat was the unexpectedness of it all. No one knew where the ball would go if it was hit. Once when he timed his shot a little late he caught the ball just as it was passing him and drove it flying past the wicket-keeper's head to where long-stop would have been. The fielding side was always glad to see Bray's back, and it usually did not have to wait long. But to-day, for some reason or other, he bore a charmed life. He was missed at point once, twice he gave a chance of being stumped, and the ball shaved his wickets times innumerable. But nearly every other ball he managed to hit somewhere. In the pavilion the School House rocked with laughter.

At the other end Davenham poked about scoring singles here and there. The score crept up. Amid cheers in which laughter was blended, the fifty went up. Then Bray, in a particularly gallant effort to steer a ball well outside the off stump round to short-leg, hit, all three wickets flying out of the ground. It was a suitable end to a great innings.

He received a royal welcome in the pavilion.

"Bray, my son," said Gordon, "you are a sportsman. Come to the tuckshop and have a drink. Nellie, mix this gentleman an ice and a lemonade, and put it down to my account. Thank you. Ah, there's Collins. Good luck, Collins; keep your head."

Two minutes later Collins returned to the pavilion with a downcast face.

"The damned thing broke," he said, as if he considered breaks illegal in House matches.

The rest of the side played in the usual light-hearted School House spirit. There were some fine hits made, and some scandalous ones, too. It was rather like a cinematograph show. Everyone slammed about; the Buller's men missed catches galore. Davenport was missed four times in making fourteen. And somehow or other the score rose to quite respectable heights. Byes helped considerably. The final score was one hundred and twenty.

"And now," said Collins, "we have got to field for two hours to-day. To-morrow is not a half, so we shall have

to field all the time; we sha'n't get a knock till after roll on Saturday. Five hours' fielding. Damn!"

"And it will do you a lot of good, too," said Foster. "Are you all ready, House? Come on then."

A-K Senior filed out into the field. A loud cheer rose from the crowd. The House was amazingly partisan. Whether a House side is losing by an innings or winning by two hundred runs, it is always sure of the same reception when it goes on to the field from its own men. The light had grown rather bad and Foster began bowling with the trees at his back, so as to hide his delivery. At the other end Bradford was to bowl.

The start was sensational.

Buller's sent in Crampin and Mitchell first, two hefty footballers, with strong wrists and no science, who had run up some big scores in the preliminary rounds.

Foster ran up to bowl. Crampin had a terrific swipe. The ball turned from the bat. The bat only just touched it.

"How's that?" roared Gordon.

The finger went up. A ripple of clapping ran along the side of the ground.

"You stick to that," said Collins, "and we shall get them out by to-morrow night."

"Dry up," said Gordon ironically. "Can't you see we are going to win? . . . Man in!"

Jack Whitaker came in. He was far and away the most stylish bat in the school, and had scored a lot of runs during the season. He faced the bowling quite confidently; he had played Foster a hundred times at the nets, and knew his tricks well. He played through the over with ease. The last ball he placed in front of short-leg for a single.

Bradford went on to bowl. He was one of the usual House match class of bowler. No idea of length, or direction, only an indefatigable energy and tremendous pace. His first ball was a long hop wide on the off. Whitaker banged it past point for four.

The next ball was a full pitch to leg. Collins had to run about a hundred yards to rescue it from the road. Bradford looked fierce. He took a longer run than usual, rushed up

to the wicket, and plunged the ball in with all his force. A howl of untuneful applause rose from under the trees. The ball not only happened to be straight, but was also a yorker. It was quite unplayable. Whitaker's middle stump fell flat.

There are times when a panic seizes the very best side, and for the next hour and a half the House had the pleasant experience of watching an unusually strong Buller side rabbit out before an only moderate attack. Buller's side contained four First and two Second Eleven colours, to say nothing of three Colts caps. And yet by six o'clock the whole team was dismissed for eighty-three. There was nothing to account for the rot. Foster and Bradford bowled unchanged. Bradford took six of the wickets, four clean bowled. It was quite incomprehensible.

"I can't understand it," said Gordon at tea. "Bradford was bowling the most utter drivel half the time, and I would have given anything to have been batting. And you were not bowling at your best, you know, Foster."

"I am well aware of that; but, heavens! it was sheer joy. Look at old Collins, down there, beaming at the thought of not having to field to-morrow."

"It's all right," mumbled Collins from a huge cup of tea.

"By Jove! wouldn't it be gorgeous if we could win this match, and finish up by beating the Buller crowd at their own game?" said Gordon. "Damn it all, I don't see why we shouldn't. What we have done once we can do again. They are a better side, I know, but we'll have a damned good shot at winning."

Of course Buller's laughed at the whole thing.

"It's really rather funny," they said. "But, of course, we are in absolutely no danger of losing. We couldn't wreck like that again; and, what's more, we shouldn't let an ass like Bray make so many runs again. Oh, we are quite safe!"

The School House kept quiet. They were not going to shout their hopes all over the school. It would look so bad if they got thoroughly beaten in the end. But in the

studies and dormitories that night there was only one thought in all those minds—the thought that victory was just possible.

The next day it rained the whole time. The courts were flooded with water, the branches dripped with a tired languor. Gordon polished off two exams with his masterly speed, and returned to his study.

Saturday morning broke grey and wet. It rained spasmodically till midday, and then cleared up. With a sigh of relief Gordon walked up the big schoolroom to show up the last piece of work that he would do at Fernhurst. For a last composition it was hardly creditable. A long paper on the *Œdipus Tyrannus* was finished in under an hour. But Gordon had ceased to care for academic distinctions. As he closed the door of the big school, and went out into the cloisters, he realised that a certain stage of his journey was over and done with for ever.

By lunch-time all signs of rain had cleared off, and the sun shone down on an absolutely sodden ground. Runs would be very hard to get. A lead of thirty-seven meant a lot on such a wicket. An atmosphere of nervous expectation overhung the whole House. Everyone was glad when the meal was over.

The match began directly after lunch. There would be very likely some difficulty in finishing the game that day. Collins and Foster went in first. Gordon had asked to be kept back till later. The start was dull. Foster was taking no risks, and Collins seemed quite unable to hit the ball at all, which was luckily always off the wicket. Ten went up after quarter of an hour's play.

And then Foster, reaching out to play forward, slipped on the wet grass and was stumped. Three balls later Bradford was caught and bowled. It was Gordon's turn to go in. Nearly everything depended on him. If he failed, the whole side would probably collapse. The tail had done miracles in the first innings; but it could not be expected to do the same again.

Gordon took guard nervously. He resolved to play himself in carefully, but he never could resist the tempta-

tion to have a "go." The first ball was well up, just outside the off stump. Gordon stepped across and let fly. On an ordinary wicket it would have been quite all right. But he had forgotten how slow the pitch was. The ball hung in the air; he was much too soon; the ball sailed straight up into the air! Point and cover-point both ran for it. "Crampin!" yelled out Whitaker. Neither heard; they crashed into one another; the ball fell with a dull thud. The House gave a gasp of relief.

It was a costly mistake. For when once he got his eye in, Gordon was very hard to get out. And, moreover, he was one of the few people who could get runs quickly on a really wet wicket, for the simple reason that nearly all his shots went into the air; and so he did not find the sodden ground making off drives which should have resulted in fours only realise singles.

That afternoon Gordon found the bowling perfectly simple. At the other end wickets fell slowly, but he himself was scoring fast. A hard shot over cover-point sent up his individual fifty, and two overs later he drove a length ball on the off stump past mid on to the boundary, and the hundred went up amid cheers.

"It is a mystery to me," said Foster, "how that man Caruthers ever gets a run at all; he has no defence, and hits straight across everything."

"Don't let's worry about that," said Collins; "sufficient be it that he is hitting these Buller's swine all over the place. Oh, good shot!"

A half-volley had landed first bounce among the masters sitting under the wall. The umpire signalled six.

One hundred and fifty went up.

And then Gordon mistimed a slow yorker, and was clean bowled for eighty-five.

He was received with a storm of clapping; the House lined up cheering as he ran in between the ropes.

"Gratters! Well done!" shouted Foster. "That's a damned fine knock to finish your Fernhurst cricket days with! Well done!"

Everyone came up and congratulated him. It was a

proud moment, in some ways the proudest of his whole career.

A few minutes later another burst of clapping signalled the end of the innings. The side had made one hundred and eighty-six. Buller's were left with two hundred and twenty-three to win. Anything might happen. Just before five Foster led the House on to the field.

The next hour and a half was fraught with delirious happiness and excitement. Foster bowled magnificently, Bradford managed to keep a length ; the whole side fielded splendidly. Wicket after wicket fell. Victory became a certainty. Gloom descended over the Buller's side. Round the pavilion infants with magenta hat ribbons yelled themselves hoarse. It was one of those occasions in which eternity seems compressed into an hour. Half-past six came. No one went up to tea, everyone was waiting for the end. At last it came. Whitaker, who alone had been able to withstand the School House attack, over-reached himself, Gordon gathered the ball quickly, the bails flew off. The umpire's hand rose. A wild shriek rose from the crowd. Gordon's last game at Fernhurst was over ; his last triumph had come ; at last " Samson had quit himself like Samson." Through the lines of shrieking juniors the team passed into the pavilion. Gordon began to collect his things, to pack up his bag. He gave it to a fag to carry up.

Collins and Foster and Gordon walked up from the field arm in arm.

" Well, if we stopped on here for a hundred years," said Foster, " we shouldn't find a better hour to leave."

" Yes, the end has made up for any disappointments on the way. It will be a long time before we have as wonderful a time again," Gordon said, as he passed in the sunset, for the last time, through the gate of the cricket-field which had been, for him, the place of so many happy hours.

CHAPTER VII

THE TAPESTRY COMPLETED

To Gordon this match seemed the ideal rounding off of his career. There had been no anti-climax, with him the best had come at the end. He would not have to look back and compare his last term unfavourably with the glories of yester year. He had done what he set out to do, he would step rose-garlanded out of the lighted room, in the flush of his success. It was exactly as he had wished. Perfectly satisfied, he lay back in his chair, with his feet on the table, too tired to do anything, merely thinking.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in."

Rudd came in nervously with a House list in his hand.

"Oh, Caruthers, the Chief wants a list of the trains people are going home by."

"Eight-forty to Waterloo. Thank you. Don't forget to close the door."

Rudd walked towards the door, but as he put his hand on the knob he turned round.

"Well," he began falteringly, "I suppose you are jolly proud of yourself now, aren't you?"

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Oh, you know quite well. You have done damned well according to your own point of view. You have aimed at getting the supreme power, and you have got it all right." Rudd had lost his nervousness now, he was shifting his feet a little, but the sentences flowed easily. "I am a weak head, I know, and you have managed to smash me quite easily. It wasn't very hard, although you pretend you are the devil of a fellow."

"What on earth are you driving at?"

"Oh, not much; only I want to show you how much you have done for the House. You are big, and you're strong, and all that; you've broken up any authority I ever had, and you've taken it yourself. And, of course, as long as you are here, it's all very well. But what about when you have left? You are too self-centred to see anybody else's point of view. *Après moi le deluge*; that's your philosophy. As long as you yourself prosper, you don't care a damn what happens to anyone else, and you have prospered right enough. You'll have left a name behind you, all right."

"I don't want to have to kick you out, Rudd," said Gordon, in a voice in which annoyance and contempt were equally blended.

"I don't care what you say; I'm going to finish what I have got to say. You'll probably not understand, you are too short-sighted. But what sort of a future have you left the House? Order was kept all right when you were here; you are strong. But when you have left, who is going to take your place? Foster could have, but he's leaving. Davenport's leaving too, so's Collins. The new prefects will be too weak. At the best they would have had a hard time. But probably the prefectorial dignity would have been sufficient, if you hadn't smashed it up. You say 'personality' must rule, but there is not so much personality flying about. We weak men have got to shelter ourselves behind the strength of a system, and you have smashed that. No one is going to obey me next term. They know I am incapable; the House will run wild; but they wouldn't have found it out but for you. That's what you've done this term. You yourself have succeeded, but your success has meant the ruin of the House for at least a year, that's what you have done. And I expect you are jolly proud of yourself, too. You only care for yourself."

Rudd finished exhausted, and stood there gasping. Gordon looked straight at him for a second or so, then picked up a book and began to read; Rudd shifted from foot to foot for a minute and then moved out quickly.

What an ass the man was, thought Gordon. The beaten

man always tries to make the victor's defeat seem less. It is all he has to do. Damn it all, a man has to look after himself in this world ; everyone was struggling to get to the top, and the weak had to be knocked out of the way.

Then Foster came in all aglow with excitement, and the two went up to the tuck-shop and ate numerous ices, and made a great row, and knocked over many chairs, and threw sugar about. Rudd was clean forgotten, as they rolled back triumphantly, just as the roll bell was ringing. Work was over. Gordon wandered round the studies, talking to everyone ; in second hall they had a big celebration supper for the whole side. They had two huge pies, a ham, countless éclairs ; they sang songs, laughed and told anecdotes. They finished with the school *Carmen*, and drank to the House's future success. Laughing and singing, they at last made for the dormitories, filled with a wonderful happiness that was exquisitely unsubstantial and beautifully fugitive.

But when the lights went out, and silence descended on the dormitory, Gordon began to think of his conversation with Rudd ; and, as he thought, there came over him again the fierce longing to get to the heart of things and to see life as it was, shorn of its coverings. Looking at his career from the spectator's point of view, even Christy would have to own that it had been eminently successful. He had been captain of the House ; no one had blamed him that the House had failed to win their matches ; no one can make bricks without straw ; what did matter was that he had always stood up for the House's rights, he had never given way to "the Bull," he had been strong. This last term he had been head of the House in all but name ; he had won the batting cup ; and he had finished by playing a big part in the biggest triumph that the House had achieved for several years. In all outward aspects he had been a great success.

But Gordon had had enough of outward aspects. He wanted to get to the root of things, to get on terms of equality with life ; he was tired of seeing everything through flickering glass. What had he actually done ?

And when he began to sum up his achievements, he was forced to own that most of them were athletic triumphs, and athletics meant little to him. He had long ceased to worship them. Because a man could make a big score in a House match, it did not mean that he was in any way fit for the battle of life ; and what else had he done ? He had carried on a sort of guerrilla warfare with "the Bull." It had never come to a real head ; so little really does. Most things are left unaccomplished in the end ; and what had he gained by this contest, and what had been the use of it ? "The Bull" was one of the few really fine masters in the school. He was a man, and towered above the puny pettiness of Rogers and Christy ; the rest were nonentities. Buller had reached his position of authority because he was the "noblest Roman of them all," and yet Gordon had spent a whole year fighting against a man whom he really admired. It was, of course, the inevitable clash of two egotisms ; but that did not alter the facts. He had been wasting himself fighting against a really fine man, when there were so many rotten traditions and useless customs that ought to be attacked ; but he had let them alone. The only abuse he had attacked was the worship of sport, and he began to wonder whether it had been worth it. Might it not have been better to have let the school go on believing in its gods a little longer ? They would be disillusioned, as he had been disillusioned, sooner or later. But why not let them be happy in their illusions as long as possible ? Happiness was so fugitive ; and in illusions only are we ever really happy. Life was so uncertain, too. He had broken down a false god, but had he given them anything to worship in its stead ? Better a false god than no god at all. He had left the School agnostics as far as school politics were concerned. They were adrift, they had begun to see how fatuous their worship of sport had been, but they had nothing to worship in its place. They would get listless, apathetic, inert ; and enthusiasm was the only vital thing in life.

And what else had he done ? Rudd had been right. He had smashed through a garden of dandelions. He had

rooted up flowers and weeds indiscriminately. It had been quite easy ; he had done nothing wonderful ; and he had left desolation behind him. Nothing would grow for some time in the plot he had ruined. And yet he was "a great success," the world said.

And as he reasoned it out, a wild feeling of hatred for the world and all it stood for crept over him. It was all sham. No one looked beyond the surface of things. "Only the superficial do not judge by appearances," Wilde had said, mocking at society ; and he had been right. Life was all sham. It was a mass of muddled evolutions ; the world was too slack to find out the truth, or perhaps it was afraid to discover it. For the truth was not pleasant. Gordon did not know what it was ; all he saw was that life was built of shams, that no one worshipped anything but the god of things that seem. A wild wrath surged over him ; he lay supine, cursing at the darkness, till at last sleep, with the great gift of oblivion, brought peace to his weary brain.

The next morning he woke with the same feeling of depression ; he looked round his dormitory. There were seven of them, all perfectly happy and contented. And why ? Merely because they looked at the surface only, because they did not take the trouble to find out what was true and what was false. They were happy in their ignorance, and he, too, could be happy if he just took things as they were. His last few weeks had been so full of joy, because he had not taken the trouble to think. Thought was the cause of unhappiness. And yet he had to think. He hated half measures. For a certain space he had to live on earth, and he wanted to discover what life really was. What lay beyond the grave he did not know, "sufficient for the day were the day's evil things." But he felt that he must try and plumb the depth or shallowness of the day's interests. He could not bear the idea of a contentment purchased by cowardice, by the fear to tear down the veils of superficial gossamer, and see life as it was.

Yet he had learnt from Tester that the soul is man's most sacred possession, and must not be shown to the crowd ;

that he must always mask his true emotions, except in the company of those who could understand them.

So he went down to breakfast telling Collins the latest joke from *The London Mail*. On his way back to the studies he ran into a fag.

"Oh, Caruthers," he said, "Chief wants to see you in his study."

Gordon found the Chief waiting for him.

"You are not busy, I hope, are you, Caruthers?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Well, at any rate, I shall keep you only for a minute. I just wanted to speak to you for a second before you left. Everything is such a rush on the last day. I suppose you have found that authority brings a good many difficulties with it, and I have heard that you have had a row or two. But I think you have done very well on the whole. I did not say very much about it at the time, but about two years ago I had very grave doubts about how you were going to turn out; and I must say that I was very nervous about making you a prefect. But, still, I think your last year has really developed your character, and you certainly have had the wisdom and luck, shall we say, like the host at the wedding, to keep your best till last."

The Chief smiled the smile that was peculiarly his own, and peculiarly winning. "Well, I must not keep you any longer. But I did want to take this opportunity of telling you that I have been pleased with you this term, though perhaps my praise sounds weak beside the applause you got after your innings. Well, at any rate, I wish you the very best luck. I am sure you deserve it."

With mixed feelings Gordon left the study. He valued the Chief's opinion amazingly, but he could not help knowing that he did not deserve it. He felt somehow as though he had deceived the Chief. If only the Chief knew how he had plunged along in his own way, an egotist, an iconoclast! And then suddenly there came over him the shock of discovery, that everything in life was so distorted and hidden by superficial coverings, that even the wisest failed to discern between the true and the false.

He was able to see himself as he was, to realise the littleness of his own performances. Yet the Chief who, if anyone "saw life steadily, and saw it whole," who was always more ready to judge an action by the intention than by the result—the Chief himself had not really seen how far his achievements were below his possibilities. And if the Chief was at times deceived by the superficial, how was he, a self-willed, blundering boy, ever likely to be able to come to a true understanding ?

There was only one way of ever coming to correct decisions, and that was by a comparison with known, well-defined standards. But he had no standards by which to regulate his judgments. He had often felt the need of this before, but never so much as now. If anything of what Tester had said was true, the future was going to be very hard. False gods would be set up in the market-place. There would be new creeds, and new religions. He himself was so volatile, so open to the influence of the minute ; and he had no standards by which to tell the jewel from the paste. For he had yet to find something permanent, something that would stand the test of time. In his own life there was nothing accompanying him to the end. And in the lives of others he noted the same lack of anything that would last. Youth with its rainbow colours, its laughter, and its tears, was as fugitive as the sunlight. Love changes all too soon its wonderful unexpectedness for the drab of commonplace. "*Aimez ce que jamais on ne verra pas deux fois*," de Vigny had complained, knowing that the ideal would soon be shattered. On the outside so many things were fair ; but on examination they all fell to pieces. Swinburne had never for a moment expected that a kiss would last beyond the kissing ; his philosophy was one of a splendid resignation. For him sleep alone was eternal. Marlowe, Byron, Rossetti, even Shakespeare—they had all seen it. They had taken the sweets of the moment, and tried not to think of what would follow. Gordon could not do the same ; his generation was far too self-conscious for that ; it must analyse its emotions, dissect its pleasures, till in the end it finds nothing left.

Nothing. That was the awful dread. In four years of varied experience, was there not one thing which Gordon could carry with him to light the darkness? And, looking back, Gordon could find in all his host of memories nothing that was not too intangible, too fugitive, to bear the stress even of a summer breeze.

But away with melancholy! Still there remained a few hours in which to enjoy the fruits of a success which, if it meant little to him, conveyed a good deal to the world outside. And power is very sweet.

He tried to fling himself into the light-hearted atmosphere of rejoicing in which the whole House was revelling, but he found it impossible. His laughter was forced; yet his friends, who were not particularly subtle judges of character, noticed no change in him; he was to them just as he had always been.

Even Morcombe, who was to him more than other friends, had failed to understand.

"It must be rather decent to be leaving in the way you are," he said, as they were sitting in the games study before evening chapel. "You are at the very top of your power. If you stopped on you would probably do a good many big things, but I doubt if you would ever quite equal the appropriateness of that last innings."

"Yes," said Gordon, with a conscious irony, "it's certainly dramatic."

What use was it to try and show him what he was thinking? He had learnt that it is better to leave illusions untouched.

Often in the past he had tried to imagine what a last chapel service must be like. The subject has been done to death, of course, by the novelist. In every school story he had read the hero had always felt the same emotions: contentment with work well done, sorrow at leaving a well-loved place. He had wondered whether he would want to cry; and if so, whether he would be able to stop it. He had looked inquiringly in the faces of those who were leaving and had never read anything very new. Some were enigmas; some looked glad in a way that they were going to begin

a life so full of possibilities. Some vaguely realised that they had reached the height of their success at nineteen.

But now that his time had come, his thoughts were very different from what he had imagined. He felt the sorrow that is inevitable to anyone who is putting a stage of his life clean out of sight behind him ; but for all that he had come to the conclusion that he was not really sad at leaving. Fernhurst was for him too full of ghosts ; so many dreams were buried there. His feelings were mixed. He felt himself that he had failed, but he knew that he was hailed a success. He half wished that in the light of experience he could go through his four years again ; but if he did, he saw that in outward show, at any rate, he could never eclipse the glory that was his for the moment. He remembered that sermon over three years back in which the Chief had asked each boy to imagine himself passing his last hours at school. "*How will it feel*," the Chief had said, "*if you have to look back and think only of shattered hopes and bright unfulfilled promises? . . . To the pathos of human sorrow there is no need to add the pathos of failure.*" What was he to think ?—he whose career had so curiously mingled failure and success. The predominant impression was one of anxiety. The world was full of pretence and deceit, and he had no means of testing the real and the unreal.

The service slowly drew to its end. The final hymn was shouted by small boys, happy at the thought of seven weeks' holiday. The organ boomed out *God Save the King* ; there was a moment's silence. Then the school poured out into the cloisters. Gordon hardly realised his last service was over. He had been so long a spectator of these partings that he could not grasp the fact that he was himself a participator in them.

He felt very tired, and was glad when bed-time came. He experienced the same sensations that he had known as a new boy—a physical and mental weariness that longed for the ending of the day.

For a few hours silence hung round the ghostly Abbey ; then, tremendous in the east, Gordon's last whole day at Fernhurst dawned.

As far as the Sixth were concerned, work was over. The

rest of the school had to go in for two hours for the rep. exam. The drowsy atmosphere of a hot summer morning overhung everything. The studies were very quiet. Gordon took a deck-chair on to the Sixth Form green and settled down to read *Endymion*.

But he found it almost impossible to concentrate his thoughts on anything but the riotous wave of introspection that was flooding his brain. He soon gave up the attempt; and putting down the book, he lay back, his hands behind his head, gazing at the great grey Abbey opposite him, while through his brain ran Gilbert Cannan's words: "Life is round the corner." He had failed. He knew he had failed. But where and why? Then, as he began to question himself, suddenly he saw it all clearly. He had failed because he had set out to gain only the things that the world valued. He had sought power, and he had gained it; he had asked for praise, and he had won it; he had fought, and he had conquered. But at the moment of his triumph he had realised the vanity of all such success; when he had come to probe it to the root, he had found it shallow. For all the things that the world valued were shallow and without depth, because the world never looked below the surface. He had found no continuing city; his house was built upon sand.

The truth flashed in on him; he knew now that as long as he was content to take the world's view of anything, he was bound to meet with disillusionment. He would have to sift everything in the sieve of his own experience. The judgment of others would be of no avail. He would be an iconoclast. The fact that the world said a thing was beautiful or ugly, and had to be treated as such, must mean nothing to him. He would search for himself, he would plumb the depths, if needs be, in search of the true ideal which was lurking somewhere in the dark. Tester had been right. It was useless to look back to the past for guidance. He had a few hours back asked for some fixed standard by which to judge the false from the true. There were no standards except a man's own experience. Here at Fernhurst he had failed to find anything, because he had sought for the

wrong things; he had at once accepted the crowd's statement for the truth. Now it would be different. In his haste he had said that Fernhurst had taught him nothing. He had been wrong. It had taught him what many took years to learn, and sometimes never learnt at all. It had taught him to rely upon himself. In the future he would take his courage in his hands, and work out his own salvation on the hard hill-road of experience.

The school was just pouring out from the rep. exam. He heard Foster shouting across the courts.

"Caruthers, you slacker, come up to the tuck-shop."

"Right-o!" he yelled back; and racing across the green jumped the railings, and went laughing up to the tuck-shop.

"I say, Foster, let's have a big tea this afternoon. We had a supper for the A-K side on Saturday. Let's have the rest up to-day."

Gordon felt flushed with excitement of what lay before him. He wanted everyone else to laugh with him too. An enormous tea was ordered. Men from the outhouses came down, the tables were drawn up on the V. A green, and the afternoon went by in a whirl of happiness. From here they rolled out arm in arm for the prize-giving. For the last time Gordon saw the whole staff sitting on "their dais serene." He looked at the row of faces. There they were, the teachers of youth, most of whom had never at any time penetrated to the heart of anything. They were automata, machines for repeating the same old platitudes. There was Rogers puffed out with pride; Christy, pharisee and humbug, superbly satisfied with himself. Finnemore sat in the background, a pale grey shadow, that had been too weak to get to grips with life at all. Trundle nursed his chin, twittering in a haze of indecision. Ferrers was fidgeting about, impatient of delay. He, at any rate, was not being misled by outside things; it he was misled by anything, it was by the impulse of his own feverish temperament. He was the splendid rebel leader of forlorn hopes, the survival of those

> *"Lonely antagonists of destiny*
> *That went down scornful before many spears."*

There, again, was Macdonald, with the same benign smile that time could not change. As he looked at him, Gordon thought that he at least could not have been deceived, that he must have realised early the vanity of human effort, but had too kind, too wide a heart to disillusion the young. And, above all, sat Buller, a second Garibaldi, with a heart of gold, an indomitable energy, a splendid sincerity, the most loyal of Fernhurst's sons. And as Gordon looked his last at his old foe, he felt that "the Bull" was so essentially big, so strong, so noble of heart, that it hardly mattered what he worshipped. There hung round him no false trapping of the trickster; sincerity was the keynote of his life. Gordon would search in vain, perhaps, for a brighter lodestar. As two vessels that have journeyed a little way together down a river, on taking their different courses at the ocean mouth, signal one another "good luck," so Gordon from the depth of his heart wished "the Bull" farewell and Godspeed.

At last the form lists had been read out. A slight titter had rewarded Gordon's position of *facile ultimus*. The cups were being distributed. Gordon went up for the batting cups, his own individual one, and the challenge one that went to the House. Foster went up for the Senior cricket; it was a veritable School House triumph. The Chief made his usual good-bye speech, kindly, hopeful, encouraging. The head of the school shouted "Three cheers for the masters!"—the gates swept open, the cloisters were filled with hurrying feet.

The last hours passed all too swiftly. In a far corner of the gallery Gordon sat with Morgan, listening to his last school concert. Opposite the choir in their white shirts, and brushed-back hair, sang the school songs inseparable from the end of the school year. There was the summer song, the "Godspeed to those that go," the poignant *Valete*:

"We shall watch you here in our peaceful cloister,
Faring onward, some to renown, to fortune,
Some to failure—none if your hearts are loyal—
None to dishonour."

To Gordon every word brought back with it a flood of memories. He could see himself, the small boy, reading those verses for the first time before he had gone to Fernhurst, ignorant of what lay before him. How soon he had changed his fresh innocency! How soon his bright gold had grown dim! Then he saw himself this time last year, listening to those words with an unbounded confidence, certain that he at least would never achieve failure. Visions in the twilight! And what was the dawn to bring?

The Latin *Carmen* began. The school stood on their seats and howled it out. Then came *Auld Lang Syne.* They clasped hands, swaying in chorus. The echoes of *God Save the King* shook the timbered ceiling, someone was shouting "Three cheers for the visitors!"; the school surged towards the door; Gordon found his feet on the small stone stairway. He looked back once at the warm lights; the honour-boards that would never bear his name; the choir still in their places; the visitors putting on their coats and wraps. Then the stream moved on; the picture faded out; and from the courts came the noise of motors crunching on the gravel.

As Gordon walked into the cool air he ran into Ferrers.

"Good-bye, sir."

"You are off, are you? Well, good luck. Write to me in the hols; I'll look you up if I'm in town. If not, cheer-o!"

He was gone in a second.

> *"'So some time when the last of all our evenings*
> *Crowneth memorially the last of all our days . . .'"*

Gordon murmured to himself as he walked slowly down to the dining hall. . . .

The next morning there was the inevitable bustle, the tipping of the servants, the good-byes, the promises to write at least twice during the holidays, the promises which were never kept.

"Here, Bamford, I say," shouted Gordon, "take my bag down to the station."

Bamford looked almost surly at being told to do anything on that last day. "Authority forgets a dying king,"

thought Gordon. His power could not have been so great if it began to wane almost before he had gone.

The eight-forty came into the station, snorting and puffing.

Gordon secured a corner seat, and leant out of the window, shaking hands with everyone he could see.

"You'll be down next term, won't you ?" yelled Morgan, bursting as ever with good will.

"I expect so," said Gordon.

But in his heart of hearts he knew that he would never come back. He would be afraid lest he should find the glamour with which he had surrounded the grey studies and green walks of Fernhurst merely a mist of sentiment that would fade away. So many things that he had believed in he had found untrue. But he wanted to keep fresh in his mind the memory of Fernhurst as he had last seen it, silver and beautiful in the morning sun.

The train slowly steamed out. Hands were waved, handkerchiefs fluttered. Slowly the Abbey turned from silver into blue, till at last it was hidden out of sight.

Gordon sank back into his seat. He was on the threshold of life ; and he stepped out into the sunlight with a smile, which, though it might be a little cynical, as if he had been disillusioned, held none the less the quiet confidence of a wayfarer who knew what lay before him, and felt himself well equipped and fortified "for the long littleness of life."